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FT 122 MAY 1999

# fortean times

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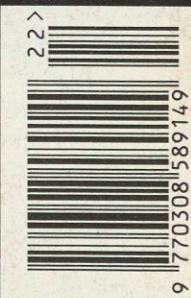
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# CONTENTS

MAY 1999 No 122



## REGULARS

6  
**EDITORIAL**

8  
**STRANGE DAYS**

Dare you ride the rollercoaster of weirdness?

22  
**FORTÉAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

Mediums and the message...

45  
**FORUM**

**PSIS AND WHISPERS**

The future isn't 753126... - Jenny Randles

**ESOTERRORISM**

It's god to tok! - Niklas Rasche

**TALONS SHOW**

Big bad killer eagles - Darren Naish

**MUMMY DEAREST**

Tutankhamun & the trinity - Ahmed Osman

50  
**LETTERS**

55  
**REVIEWS**

60  
**READER INFO**

61  
**THE HIEROPHANT**

Taking the fortean pulse

66  
**PHENOMENOMIX**

## OFFERS

**5 UNCONVENTION '99**

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ALEXANDER TOMLINSON

## FEATURES

28

### THE UNCOVER-UP PART 2 - FREEDOM OF DISINFORMATION

In Part 2 of his article, DON ECKER reveals how the UFO community was the victim of disinformation



34

### A BUC'S LIFE

In an exclusive excerpt from his book *The End of Time*, DAMIAN THOMPSON discovers a new breed of millenarian - computer programmers

38

### ART AND ARTIFICE

ROB IRVING treads the fine line between creativity and deception

42

### PLAIN OF JARS

If you go down to the woods in Laos, MIKE JAY promises you a big surprise



FOR DETAILS OF SUBSCRIPTIONS, HOW TO ENTER COMPETITIONS, HOW TO SUBMIT MATERIAL AND OTHER INFORMATION FOR NEW READERS, SEE PAGE 60.

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Hoaxing is a complicated subject and any definition must take account of the complexity of types of belief and the need to believe. To refer to crop-circle makers as 'hoaxers' (as media coverage and believers tend to) is mental laziness – many of them have no thought of hoaxing in the sense of trying to fool someone for fun or profit. If anything they are reviled by the croppies – people who believe the designs are made by 'higher powers' (angels, goddesses or aliens) – precisely because they demonstrate how much the croppies have fooled themselves. But this too, is a simplistic interpretation of what is going on as some croppies believe that 'higher powers' can work through the makers, while some makers extol their own sources of artistic inspiration.

On a religious level, this is the equivalent of



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In this issue, Rob Irving tackles these issues head on, arguing that one person's hoax is another's religion and both are creations of the human imagination at play. Irving's conclusion applies as much to science as it does to religion. The Cottingley fairies are a striking example; widely categorised as a hoax, the cardboard cut-out fairies by two Yorkshire girls in the 1920s began life as their own private game, trying to visualise what they thought they saw or would have liked to have seen. By the time their father found them and showed them to the Theosophist Edward Gardner and spiritualist Conan Doyle, it was too late to confess and disabuse these great and educated men of what they too wanted to see. Again, who was hoaxing whom?

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#### SATURDAY

DAVID BARRETT - UFOs, Pseudo-science & New Religions

KEN CAMPBELL - Wol Wontok

LIONEL FANTHORPE - Mysterious People

TONY HEALY - The Yowie

TONY HEALY - The Poltergeist Down Under

NEIL NIXON - They're Not All Lunatics on the Fringe

JENNY RANDLES - I've Seen the Future

ANDY ROBERTS - On the Mountain of Madness

GORDON RUTTER & SCOTT RUSSELL - Rosslyn Chapel

EMMET SWEENEY - Escape from Armageddon:  
The True Secret of the Pyramids

DAMIAN THOMPSON - Bug, Dome and Apocalypse:  
The meaning of the millennium

DANIEL WOJCIK - Modern Millennial Beliefs

Psychic testing by ASSAP

The Mind Machine

#### SUNDAY

JAN BONDESON - Basilisks, Vegetable Lambs, Stuffed Mermaids and Other Monsters & Marvels from Old Natural History

PETER BROOKESMITH - Flying Round Armageddon:  
Ufology and the coming Apocalypse

JACK COHEN - Science & Magic

MICHAEL CREMO - Forbidden Archaeology

TED HARRISON - Pre-Millennial Tension

TONY HEALY - A History of Australian Cryptozoology

LYNN PICKNETT & CLIVE PRINCE - Masters of the Millennium

SERGIO DELLA SALA - Mind Myths

IAN SIMMONS - Proof of Everything

RICHARD WISEMAN - Recent Research in Parapsychology

DANIEL WOJCIK - From Spirit Photos to Apocalyptic Polaroids  
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The Mind Machine

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## sidelines

**THE TALKING CURE:** Pain during an operation on a foot abscess led Truong Van Xa, 32, to speak for the first time. Xa, a deaf-mute, had had a local anaesthetic, but when Dr Vo Thanh Nhan of the Binh Dinh provincial hospital in Vietnam made an incision, he screamed "painful!". His vocabulary has grown since, but his hearing is still impaired. [AFP] 7 Jan 1999.

**LAST POST:** A man using the pit-style post office lavatory in Grove Town, Kingston, Jamaica, on 19 December heard the tune of 'Silent Night' ringing up from the cesspit. Believing he was the victim of a voodoo curse, he alerted neighbours who searched the latrine and discovered a case of undelivered Christmas post, including a musical greeting card that played 'Silent Night'. *Independent on Sunday*, 10 Jan 1999.

**DOH!**: Label on a child's pushchair: "Remove your child before folding the baby stroller". *Eve. Standard*, 12 Feb 1999.

**PHOTO COPY:** An exact replica of the Shroud of Turin has been found hidden in a shrine above a Benedictine convent chapel in the Czech Republic, near the Polish border. A letter in Latin signed by the then archbishop of Turin claims the copy was affixed to the original on 4 May 1651. The veil includes traces of damage on the original from a fire in 1532. Convent officials are willing to submit the relic for tests to establish how it was made. *National Post (Canada)*, 21 Jan 1999.

**TAKING SIDES:** Archaeologist Bryn Walters claims that it was the Romans who began the British habit of driving on the left. During studies at a Roman quarry outside Swindon, Walters discovered that the ruts coming out of the quarry, made by carts laden with rocks and therefore deeper than those going in, were on the left. The ruts are rare because most of Britain's Roman roads were resurfaced many times after they left. *AA Members' Magazine*, Feb 1999.

**DOUBLE LIFE:** Two women came face to face to celebrate a triple coincidence – they share the same name, the same town and the same age of 105. The Mary Cartwrights, of Dudley, West Midlands, met after the coincidence was discovered by a local photographer. *Portsmouth News*, 22 Jan 1999.

**BONES OF CONTENTION:** Police searching for a missing man in Phu Tho province, northern Vietnam, suspected that his bones had been boiled up to make traditional medicine. A local man found a skeleton still clad with traces of flesh at the site of a recent fire in a forest clearing. A glue-like substance made from the bones was confiscated from the man's home. He claimed to have mistaken the skeleton for the remains of a large monkey. *Eve. Standard*, 29 Dec 1998.

**HEART ATTACK:** Three dead pigs were tossed into a campus skip at Stanford University in California on the first three weekends of November 1998, all seemingly "victims of someone practising heart bypass surgery", according to police Lieut Del Bandy. The pigs, with open chests and blood vessels missing from their legs, were not Stanford laboratory animals. *San Jose (CA) Mercury News*, 24 Nov 1998.

## hominid one, head to toe

The oldest near-complete skeleton of a hominid has been found by Ron Clarke, a British scientist based at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. Prof Phillip Tobias, head of university's paleoanthropology department, said it was "probably the most momentous palaeoanthropological find ever made in Africa."

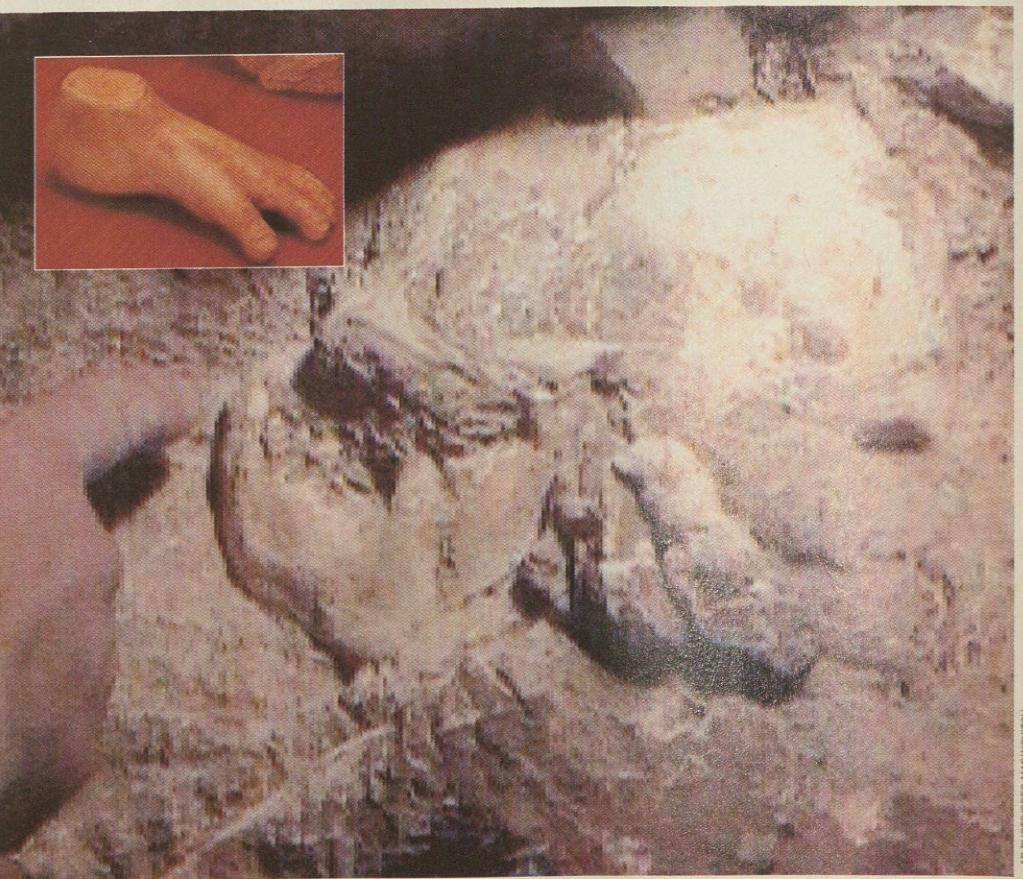
The discovery was made at the Silberberg Grotto in Sterkfontein Valley, about 20 miles (32km) west of Johannesburg. Dated by shifts in the Earth's polarity over millions of years, as well as analysis of rocks, the remains are estimated to be between 3.22 million and 3.58 million years old. The skeleton of an adult *Australopithecus* (southern ape) about 4ft (122cm) tall includes sections of an arm, legs, a complete skull and feet – which have never before been found among remains of such antiquity.

The first part of the creature, a foot bone, was unearthed by miners in the 1920s. Dr Clarke found it in a shoe box in the

bottom of a cupboard at the University of Witwatersrand in 1992 and more foot fragments in a storeroom box labelled "bovid bones", in Sterkfontein in 1994. Yet more fragments turned up in a box labelled "monkey fossils" in Sterkfontein in May 1997. The finds fitted together, and made up significant portions of a left and right foot, ankle and tibia. His team found the remaining portion of the right tibia in the cave in July 1997 and the skull in September 1998.

So far, the left side of its face has been prised from the surrounding limestone stalagmite. It shows a creature with a small cranium, about the size of a tennis ball, and pronounced cheek bones. The presence of wisdom teeth indicate that it was an adult. From the structure of its foot it was clear that the creature walked upright, but Dr Clarke maintains that its prehensile big toe indicated that it still spent time in trees, foraging for food or seeking shelter. Other palaeontologists dispute this. The sex of the creature and its

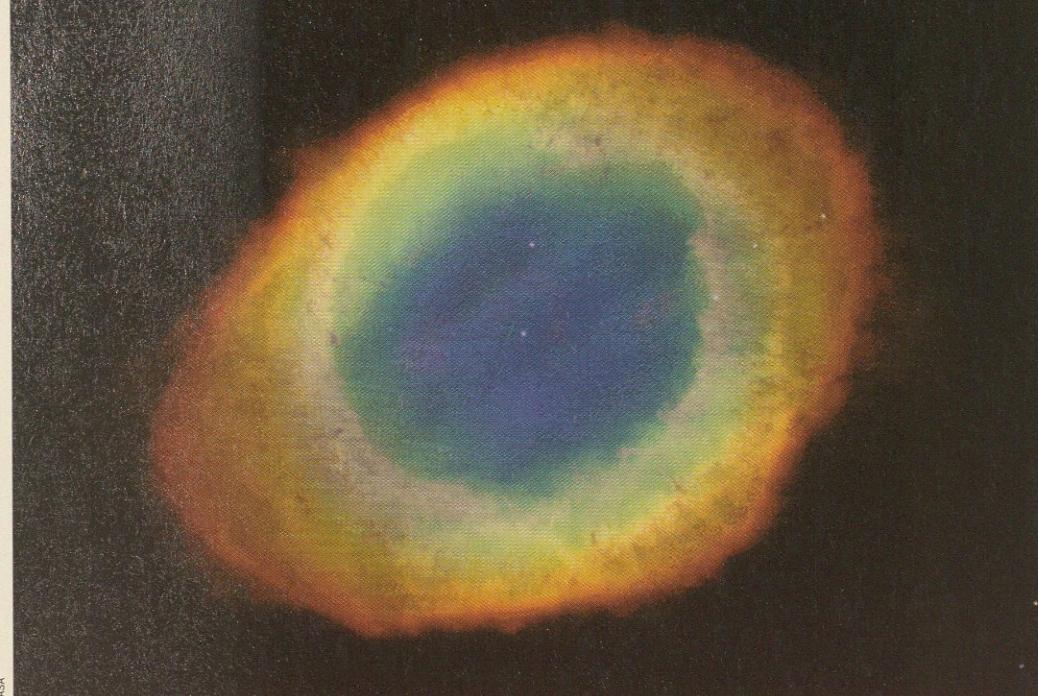
On 10 January, the earliest hominid discovery yet was announced in the Ethiopian Herald. A skull and teeth of 17 individuals from the Awash Valley where Lucy was found have been dated to 4.4 million years. *Times, Guardian, Int. Herald Tribune*, 9+10 Dec 1998; *D. Telegraph*, 10 Dec 1998, 18 Jan 1999.



MYSTERY'S AFOOT: The left side of Little Foot's face has been excavated while its foot (inset) was the first to be put together.

## sidelines

## portrait of a nebula



THE RING NEBULA, one of the most spectacular objects in the universe, is about a light year wide and 2,000 light years from Earth in the constellation of Lyra. This new image from the Hubble Space Telescope shows that the "ring" is really a cylinder of gas seen almost head-on. The faint speck in the centre was once a star bigger than the Sun, now destined to become a tiny white dwarf about the size of the Earth. *Guardian, Scotsman*, 11 Jan 1999.

## eh-oh! kinky tinky winky



TELETUBBY: Jerry Falwell gets his hands on Tinky Winky.

REV. JERRY FALWELL, 66, the barking Baptist of Lynchburg, Virginia, televangelist and founder of the now-defunct Moral Majority, has outed Tinky Winky, one of the characters in the *Teletubbies* TV show. "Parents Alert: Tinky Winky Comes Out Of The Closet", warns a headline in the latest edition of his *National Liberty Review*. "The character, whose voice is obviously that of a boy, has been found carrying a red purse and has become a favourite character among gay groups worldwide," states the article. "Further evidence that the

creators of the series intend for Tinky Winky to be a gay role model have surfaced. He is purple – the gay-pride colour – and his antenna is shaped like a triangle – the gay-pride symbol."

*Teletubbies*, a series for pre-school children, started broadcasting in America last spring after the characters Laa Laa, Dipsy, Tinky Winky and Po proved a success on the BBC. "To think that we would be putting sexual innuendo into a children's show is kind of outlandish. I find it absurd and kind of offensive," said Steve Rice, a spokesman for Itsy Bitsy Entertainment which licences the series in the US. He added that the "purse" is actually a magic bag. Tinky Winky was unavailable for comment, but Po said "Eh-oh". *NY Daily News*, 10+11 Feb; *Guardian, D. Telegraph, Independent*, 11 Feb 1999.

DAVE THOMPSON, 38, the actor who played Tinky Winky until he was removed from the show in 1997 because his "interpretation of the role was not acceptable", said *Teletubbyland* is as "evil place" – the set in Warwickshire where it is filmed, he pointed out, is not far from Meon Hill where Charles Walton, 74, was discovered impaled with his own pitchfork on Valentine's Day in 1945. The occult murderer was never identified.

Since Thompson left the show, his girlfriend deserted him, he damaged his ear in a diving accident and fell seriously ill with a rare tropical disease – all down to the Curse of *Teletubbyland*, apparently. According to the *Sunday Mirror* (14 Feb 1999): "Meon Hill is the centre of a ley line – an ancient energy source linked to the emergence of evil." It's amazing what tripe passes for journalism, isn't it?

## sidelines

**GLOW GETTER:** Truong Thi Thu Ha, 30, from a remote district in Quang Nam province, central Vietnam, discovered on 10 December that parts of her skin were glowing in the dark. The glow reportedly increased when she wore nylon garments. A similar condition was reported in March 1997 involving a 17-year-old boy in another province. [AFP] 24 Dec 1998.

**TO PROTECT AND SERVE:** The inscription on the metal bands used to tag migratory birds in the USA has been changed. The bands used to bear the address of the Washington Biological Survey, abbreviated to 'Wash.Biol.Surv.' That was until the agency received a letter from a camper in Arkansas: "Dear Sirs, While camping last week I shot one of your birds. I think it was a crow. I followed the cooking instructions on the leg tag and I want to tell you it was horrible." The bands are now marked: "Fish and Wildlife Service". *New Scientist*, 10 Oct 1998.

**PAYING FOR SALVATION:** Thai police are investigating a religious theme park in Phetchaburi province 65 miles (105km) north of Bangkok, where monks allegedly claim that aliens will soon attack and that only followers who buy expensive 10,000 baht amulets will survive. The abbot who runs the cult which built the park claims to have telepathic powers that allow him to communicate with the aliens. *Hong Kong Standard*, 12 Feb 1999.

**GETTING THE HUMP:** A foul smell led to the discovery of what appeared to be a partially burned camel carcass in an unattended Mercedes panel van parked near the Welcome Stranger pub in Kington, Hampshire. If it was a camel, said police, "it should be registered under the 1976 Dangerous Wild Animals Act". They had failed to contact the van's registered keeper. *Sunday Mirror*, 7 Feb; *Guardian, D. Telegraph*, 6 Feb 1999.

**NEW WAVE:** Israel's National Parks Authority has authorised a private contractor to build a submerged bridge into the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum that would allow 50 tourists at a time to simulate Jesus's miraculous walk on water. In order to enhance the effect, the 13ft (4m) wide, 328ft (100m) long, crescent-shaped floating bridge will not have rails. Lifeguards and boats will be in attendance in case a walker slips off.

"This is bloody ridiculous," said Israel's leading New Testament historian, Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. [AP] 2 Feb; *D. Telegraph*, 3 Feb 1999.

**WHERE ISHI?**: The brain of the last survivor of the Yahi Indian tribe has been found in a warehouse in Los Angeles 80 years after it went missing. Ishi, "the last wild man in America", emerged from hiding in the Sierra Nevada in 1911. *Sunday Times*, 21 Feb 1999.

**SPLASHING OUT:** Monica Lewinsky's blue dress, which helped bring President Clinton to trial, could become a US national treasure, ending up in the National Archives. Until then, the stained dress will be kept in a box in a darkened, temperature-controlled room, alongside historic memorabilia, such as Jackie Kennedy's bloodstained pink suit. *Irish Times*, 20 Feb 1999.

## sidelines

**DEAD CENTRE:** Kent planners are running out of burial plots in Gravesend. *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 Feb 1999.

**BUCK'S LIFE:** A cockroach can run in the dark at a metre a second, twisting and turning up to 25 times a second to avoid obstacles — making it the most nimble creature on Earth. A high-speed camera shows that it uses the tips of its antennae to maintain a constant distance from an object like a wall, even if it's uneven or zigzag. *Guardian*, 19 Feb 1999.

**STRUCK OFF:** Sipos Isvan, the manager of MÁV, the Hungarian state-owned railway, finished negotiations with trade union representatives of his striking workers at 2am. He then went home and had a fatal heart attack at 3am. His clock, which had worked without stopping for more than 10 years, stopped at the moment of his death. *Hungarian public radio*, 8 Jan 1999.

**PULL THE OTHER ONE:** Noticed in a brochure for Thomson Cruises: "A typical day might start with a genital stretch-and-tone session on the Sun Deck."

**PROPHET AND LOSS:** A Pakistani has been arrested for claiming to be a prophet sent by God to reform society, and could be charged under a blasphemy law making such offences punishable by death. Muhammad Mahmood Ahmed made the declaration at the Badshahi mosque during prayers at the Eid al-Fitr festival marking the end of Ramadan. [AFP] 12 Jan 1999.

**DING DONG:** The Duke of Gualtieri, Don Giuseppe Avarna, 83, has died in a fire at his home. In 1980 he abandoned his family and virtually all his possessions for Tava Daetz, a woman 40 years his junior, and moved into the converted church next door to his ancestral castle at Messina, Sicily. Here he annoyed his wife Magda by ringing the bells whenever he and his American girlfriend made love. Magda took him to court, he was fined by a magistrate and told to desist, but was later cleared by a higher court. The bell-ringing resumed and the duke divorced. *D. Telegraph*, 23 Feb 1999.

**RAT CORNERED:** The black rat, responsible for introducing the fleas which carried bubonic plague to Britain, is probably our rarest mammal, with a breeding population of only 1,000, isolated on Lundy in the Bristol Channel and an uninhabited island in the Outer Hebrides. Its decline is largely due to the arrival of the more aggressive and adaptable brown rat. *D. Telegraph*, 17 Oct 1998.

**JADE APPETITE:** The world's largest piece of jade was excavated 15 months after it was found in China's Liaoning province. The stone weighs 60,000 tonnes and has a diameter of 98ft (30m). *South China Morning Post*, 3 Dec 1998.

**BENDING THE RULES:** Ann Widdecombe, the Shadow Health Secretary, (known as Doris Karloff because of her sepulchral features) has declared a bent stainless steel spoon in the Commons' Register of Members' Interests. She maintains that it has a potential worth of £17,000 because it was bent by Uri Geller and given to her when they met on *Call My Bluff*. *Times*, 22 Dec 1998.

## pets race to the rescue

**JOANNE ALTSMAN, 57**, of Beaver Falls, Pittsburgh, began having a heart attack in her holiday trailer on Presque Isle in Erie, Pennsylvania, on 4 August 1998. Her American Eskimo dog, Bear, did nothing but bark and break a bedroom window; but LuLu, her Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, rose to the occasion. "I was yelling, 'Somebody help me. Please help me. Call an ambulance,'" she said. "LuLu looked at my head. She made sounds like she was crying. You know, they cry big fat tears." The pig headed through the trailer's doggy-piggy door into the fenced-in yard, pushed open the gate, which she had never done before, and walked into the road, where she lay on her back with her hooves in the air in front of passing cars.

The first driver to stop was too scared to get out, but the second followed LuLu back into the trailer-home, found the ailing Mrs Altsman and called an ambulance. When it arrived, LuLu tried to get in with Mrs Altsman, but medics gently shooed her away. Later, it was discovered that LuLu had cut her stomach on the obviously too-small doggy/piggy door. "My husband keeps enlarging it but she keeps enlarging, too," Mrs Altsman said of the one-year-old, 150lb (68kg) pig. Mrs Altsman recovered after heart surgery on 15 September. Doctors told her



that 15 minutes longer without help would probably have killed her. LuLu was rewarded with a jam doughnut, and was honoured with the ASPCA's Trooper Award for bravery at a gala luncheon in Manhattan on 2 February 1999. [AP] *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 10 Oct 1998; *NY Post*, 3 Feb 1999.

**AN EIGHT-MONTH-OLD PET** rat called Fido (left) was in his cage at 2am on 12 April when an electric heater set fire to the carpet and furniture of the house in Torquay, Devon, where he lives. Spotting the cage door was unfastened, Fido jumped down, scurried out of the blazing room, climbed up 15 stairs, each 8in (20cm) high, and scratched at the bedroom door.

Lisa Gumbley, 29, was asleep inside with her daughters, Megan, nine, and Shannon, three. Megan was woken by Fido's scratching and opened the door. There was smoke everywhere, but she didn't notice it immediately and started to carry Fido downstairs to put him back in his cage. Then she saw the smoke and flames and ran screaming back into the bedroom. The family managed to get out of the house and call the fire brigade, who quickly controlled the blaze. The family's Alsatian, Naseem, slept through the whole episode. *Times*, *Sun*, *Independent*, 14 April 1998.

TORBAY NEWS AGENCY



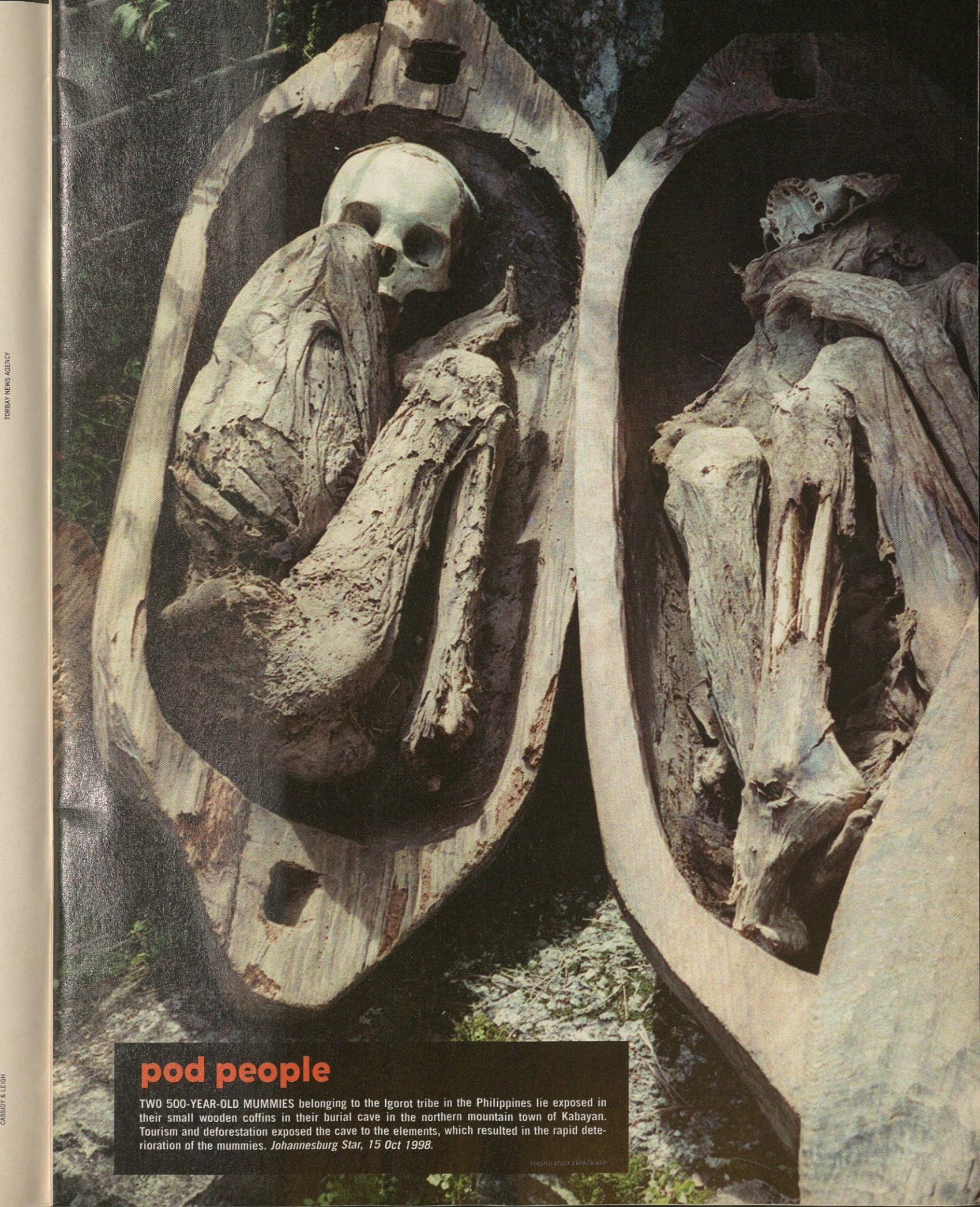
CASSIDY & LEIGH

**BUNNY BURGLAR BASHER:** Two-year-old Mopsy — with owner Anne Jenkins — outside the home she protected from an intruder.

## pod people

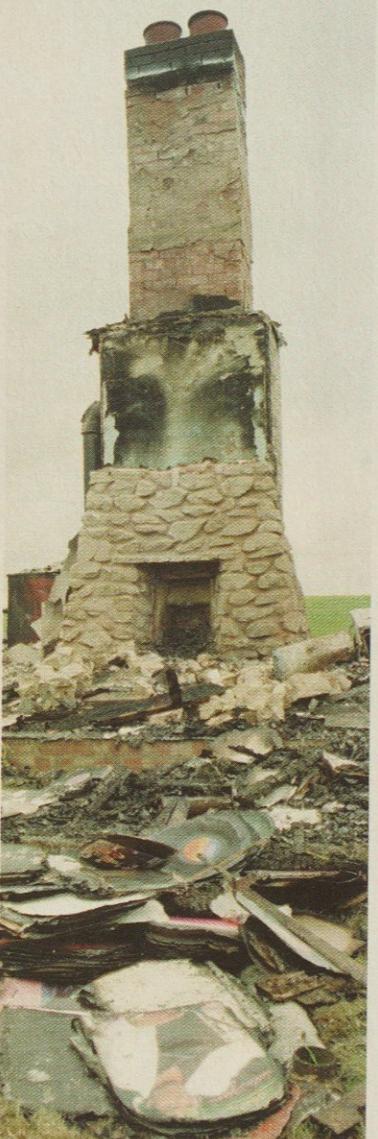
**TWO 500-YEAR-OLD MUMMIES** belonging to the Igorot tribe in the Philippines lie exposed in their small wooden coffins in their burial cave in the northern mountain town of Kabayan. Tourism and deforestation exposed the cave to the elements, which resulted in the rapid deterioration of the mummies. *Johannesburg Star*, 15 Oct 1998.

PHOTO: ANDY ZAPATA/AFP





## out of the fire



BUCKS HERALD

**THE WOODEN BUNGALOW** of Ian Perkins between Upper and Nether Winchenden in Buckinghamshire was destroyed by fire on 6 May 1998. Mr Perkins had been celebrating the birth of his son with his friend Richard Taylor. They awoke to find the place full of smoke and smashed a window to escape.

All that was left of the bungalow was the chimney stack, upon which the eyes and nose of a face seemed to have been drawn in soot. Mr Perkins, who had lived there for about 10 years, maintained that it was the portrait of a friendly ghost which had haunted the bungalow. "It looks just like the Lady, although I haven't seen her for months", he said. He and his wife had often seen her walking around the back yard, but never indoors. A lot of their friends had seen her as well. *Bucks Herald*, 13+20 May 1998.

## glastonbury treasure hunt

A MAN CALLING himself 'Stuart Pendragon' and claiming to be a long-lost brother of the Prince of Wales called on Graham Jeffs, chief executive of Mendip District Council, and after a two-hour discussion managed to obtain permission to dig up a traffic island in Glastonbury to recover a metal box containing money buried for him in 1990 by the late Dodi Fayed. Next day, armed with his letter of authority ("To Whom It May Concern: This is to authorise Stuart Pendragon to dig for his box next to the postbox between Fielding Path and Monington Road"), Pendragon and a friend hired a mechanical digger, cordoned off an area of busy road and began to dig on 4 November 1998. They ripped up the top layer

of asphalt with the digger and then clambered into the hole armed with shovels and a metal detector.

When police arrived to ask what they were doing, Pendragon waved the letter at them and was allowed to carry on. As traffic jams built up, concerned residents called Somerset County Council, which finally put a stop to the excavation, by which time the hole was 5ft (1.5m) deep and Pendragon claimed that he was within inches of recovering the box.

Mendip District Council ordered an inquiry and Mr Jeffs explained that the note



SOUTH WEST NEWS SERVICE

had been written to placate 38-year-old Pendragon, who was well known as a local eccentric. "Nobody expected, and no one could envisage, him being able to hire a mechanical digger," he said. *Standard*, 17 Nov; *Times*, *D. Telegraph*, 18 Nov 1998.

**HOLE STORY:** 'Stuart Pendragon' (below) searching for money buried for him in 1990 by the late Dodi Fayed.



SOUTH WEST NEWS SERVICE

## frozen falls



NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

**SNOW FALLS:** As extreme weather swept across Canada in winter 1998, even the mighty Niagara Falls was stilled.

## idea meets resistance

**THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL Conference on Composite Engineering** at Las Vegas was mired in controversy in August 1998 when Deborah Chung and her co-researcher, Shoukai Wang, presented a keynote address about the electrical properties of a carbon fibre composite they had developed.

Chung, Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at the University of Buffalo, explained that the

circuit in which it is situated. However, this claim has brought a wave of scientific attention because the only way the composite could produce this result is if it were to create energy itself. This opposes the second law of thermodynamics – basically, that you cannot get something for nothing.

In Chung's material, electrons appear to flow in the opposite direction, thus contradicting the concept that opposites attract.

Her findings have had a cool reception and many professionals are withholding judgment until more tests are conducted. If this material is indeed a new form of superconductor, then scientists hope that electromagnetic experiments (which should result in levitation) will verify or refute Chung's claims.

The professor herself doubts whether any resolution will come of this, claiming that they have not discovered a new

superconductor but a material that achieves comparable results by a means not yet understood. Although hesitant to acknowledge that the composite is creating energy, she cannot at present offer a better explanation for the effect.

It has been suggested that the recordings were incorrect or that a miniature battery had been created inadvertently. For the most part, scientists commenting on the discovery have remained 'intrigued' and somewhat non-committal. Chung says that her findings were accidental and came about as a result of examining the potential uses for carbon fibres in the field of 'smart' materials, a notable application for these being the development of a concrete that could relay stresses as a form of visual data.

After the initial breakthrough, Chung and Wang remained sceptical about the results until they could verify their readings, and this caution – coupled with their joint professional expertise – appears to have staved off the cries of heresy. Both researchers are continuing their investigations into the phenomenon and are currently preparing a paper for peer review as well as a patent application. **JONATHAN BRYANT**



CHUNG: cool reception

two carbon fibre layers (set in epoxy cement at right angles to each other and 'cured' at high pressure) would produce negative resistance at room temperature when a current was applied across them. Prior to this, superconductors had been the only materials able to provide little or no resistance to electrical flow. Unfortunately, such results could only be manufactured at incredibly low temperatures (around 125° Kelvin, -150°C, -234°F).

Although not a superconductor *per se*, Chung's material can allegedly achieve a similar result by compensating for the inherent resistance of the cir-

## sidelines

**BOW WOW:** A Dalmatian belonging to Mr Li Xinguo of Chengdu City, Sichuan province in China, gave birth to 15 puppies last November, a possible world record. The puppies did well in their first week even though there was insufficient milk to go round. Some of the puppies had to go on powdered milk, said the Xinhua news agency. [AFP] 10 Nov 1998.

**CARD CO-INCIDENCE:** James Smith, 74, of Swanton Abbott, Norfolk, received identical birthday cards from his daughters, even though they lived 11,500 miles (18,500km) apart. Linda Shilling, 47, living in Hamilton, New Zealand, and Shirley Best, 38, of Brington, Cambridgeshire, both chose a picture of three penguins with red bow ties. The sisters insisted that they had not colluded. *Mirror*, 12 Dec 1998.

**THAT'LL DO NICELY:** Jewellers in Milan have designed a rosary in the shape of a credit card for those who feel self-conscious praying in public. Embossed points correspond to rosary beads, and the card is available in traditional plastic, or – for the style-conscious pious – in brass, copper, or diamond-studded gold. *Vancouver Sun*, 7 Dec 1998.

**CUT UP:** A woman in Connecticut was charged with assault for allegedly slashing a former boyfriend's scrotum open with her fingernails when she found him with another woman. Dr Lawrence Weiner needed 24 stitches to close the wound. *Middlesbrough Eve. Gazette*, 24 Dec 1998.

**UNLUCKY ESCAPE:** George Roden, leader of the Branch Davidians until deposed after a gun battle with David Koresh in 1987, was found dead on 7 December from a heart attack outside a mental institution in Big Spring, Texas, from which he had escaped two days earlier. Roden, 60, in state care since being declared insane in 1989, had escaped three times from state institutions since 1993. *Examiner (Cork)*, 9 Dec 1998.

**KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING:** Firemen returned from a 999 call to find their own station ablaze, after one of them left his sausage supper frying on a stove. Two fire engines from other stations in Brighton, Sussex, were called in to fight the fire, which was spotted from the nearby Stanford Arms pub. "The man concerned is full of remorse," said Station Commander Bob Trotter. *Sunday Mirror*, 6 Dec 1998.

**BEETLE DRIVE:** A bronze and white spiny ommatid beetle unchanged since the Jurassic period 210 million years ago has been found in the Mallee region of South Australia. Specimens were found in 1991 and 1995, but it was only recently that an entomologist noticed it had body parts which had disappeared in modern insects. One reason it had evaded detection until now was because it spends most of its life underground. [AFP] 29 Sept 1998.

**PERFECT FIGURE:** If you multiply 111,111,111 by itself, you get 12,345,678,987,654,321. Our correspondent who clipped this from the *Canberra Times* (20 Nov 1998) commented: "Well, that's weird...or not..."

# WIRED FOR WEIRD

Dave Walsh grinds together the latest in high fidelity web sites.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF CRYPTOZOLOGY (ISC)

Founded in 1982 to document and evaluate evidence of unverified animals, ie "animal species or forms which have been reported in some manner but which have not been scientifically proven to exist." The ISC's scope ranges from the famous – such as Bigfoot and Nessie – to more obscure but no less significant reported animals.

<http://www.izoo.org/isc/>

## THE STROBE

'Investigating the Unknown' from New Zealand, Cam Mathias has taken an interesting approach to the concept of running this new fortean zine, by conducting interviews with various folk in RealAudio. Recent topics include 'alternative cancer treatments', 'rolling boulders on the Moon', and 'transient lunar phenomena'.

<http://www.thestrobe.com/>

## NESSIE LIVE ON THE NET

Can you spot Nessie? It had to happen sooner or later: You can now search for the Loch Ness Monster from the comfort of your own PC, thanks to the Loch Ness Monster live webcam from Scotland.

<http://www.lochness.scotland.net>

## WEIRD NEW JERSEY

Not only home to the Jersey Devil, this US state is also home to "the chicken with the human face", according to Weird NJ. The site covers hauntings, UFOs and the general weirdness to be found when touring the state. Includes downloadable video.

<http://www.inthegardenstate.com/unionmedia/weirdnj/default.asp>

## THE MUSEUM OF QUESTIONABLE MEDICAL DEVICES

"Devious Displays of Quackery, Fraud, Deceit and Deception – the largest collection of medical chicanery and mayhem ever assembled under one roof." And they're not kidding folks – shoe fitting x-ray devices, some interesting bloodletting machinery, prostate gland warmers, the 'recto motor', and the mysterious 'timely warning', which claims to prevent "night emissions by arousing the wearer". Quite.

<http://www.mtn.org/quack/>

Dave 'absinthe-boy' Walsh sojourns in Arbour Hill, Dublin, where he publishes 'Blather', a sarcastic fortean epistle (<http://www.blather.net>).



GHOST OF A CHANCE: Did Belgrave Hall's security cameras really record a ghostly figure on 23 December 1998?

## BELGRAVE HALL ENIGMA

Mark Pilkington investigates reports of a ghostly museum visitor

For just under a minute at 4.48am on 23 December 1998, a security camera outside Belgrave Hall Museum in Leicester (the entrance to which is pictured below) captured two mysterious images on video. The first, which is frozen for six seconds on the one-frame-per-second camera, has been described by some excited commentators as the figure of a ghostly woman in Victorian garb. The second, which can be seen immediately after the first has vanished, appears to be some kind of self-contained, luminous mist or fog, which rolls slowly in from the top right of the frame for around 30 seconds before sloping back off-screen.

The 24-hour recording CCTV system has only been in use at the museum since November, so the anomalous images may have a mundane origin unfamiliar to the museum staff, but the security company that fitted the cameras was also baffled.

The footage was first spotted by museum assistant Bill Garratt on the morning of 23 December, but once staff had ascertained that there had been no break-in, nothing more was done about it until the new year. "We'd have liked to have spent more time looking at it before the news broke, but we mentioned it to a journalist and the story just took off," said managing curator Stuart Warburton.

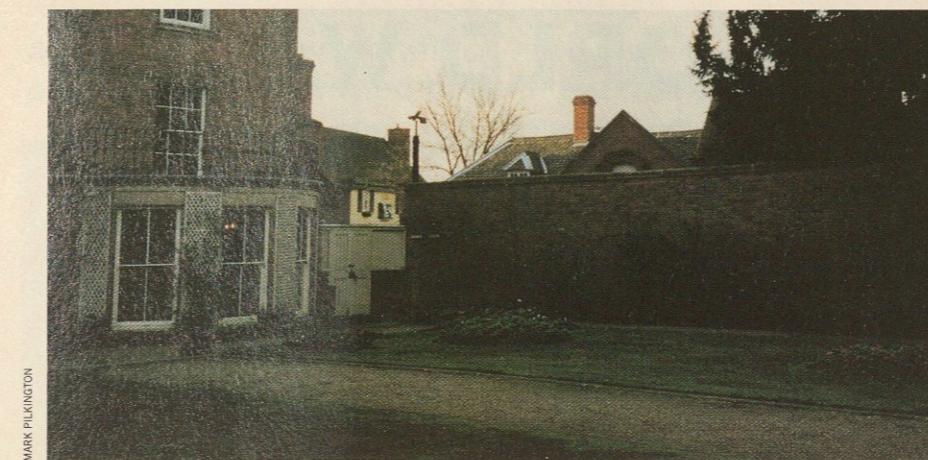


MARK PILKINGTON

On first viewing the images, the anomaly looks like it could just be rain drops hitting the camera lens. It certainly doesn't look human-shaped. It's also difficult to make out its exact position in relation to the camera; it could be at ground level in the middle of the garden, or much closer and in mid-air. Proposed explanations – and Warburton has heard plenty – have included the spectre of a lady in full Victorian garb (complete with bustle), a plastic bag, insects, a sycamore leaf, and rain drops on the camera lens. So far, he remains unconvinced by any of them: "The best way to describe them," he says, "is like a psychiatrist's ink-blot – some people see one thing, others see another."

But he knows what it isn't: "You'd see a plastic bag blow into shot and blowing around afterwards. Sky TV set up a plastic bag experiment and I'm not convinced by that one. Lightning was another possibility, but the weather conditions were mild: a light drizzle, wind at 7 knots (5mph) and relatively high humidity, so that

would be unusual. It couldn't be rain drops on the lens either, because the light source comes from above and behind the camera, whose hood prevents light getting inside and causing a reflection. Others have suggested groups of raindrops hitting each other in mid-flight to form a mass – but I'd imagine this is more unlikely than finding a ghost."



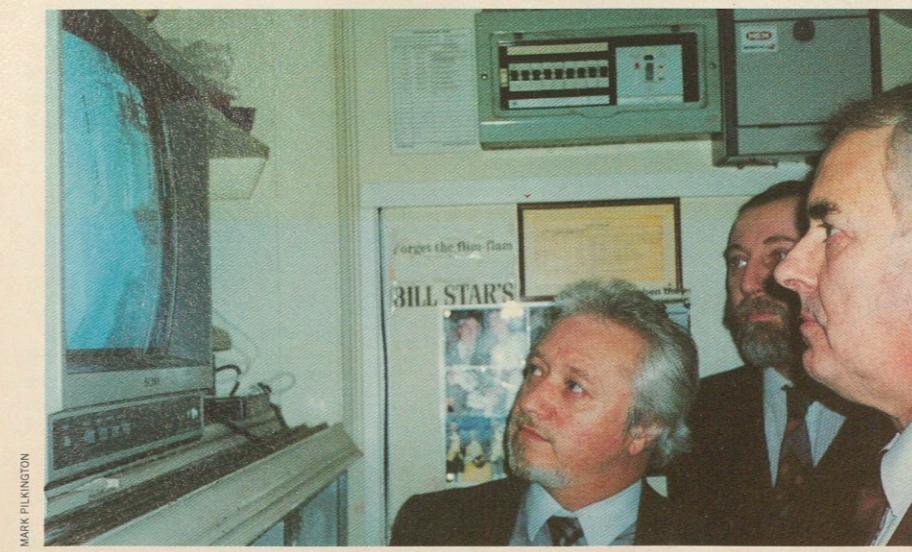
GARDEN PARTY: Gardener Mike Snuggs has seen a ghostly lady in her fifties in the museum's back garden.

The "mist" was equally difficult to pin down. It can first be seen within – or perhaps as part of – the rustling branches of a tree overhanging the wall on the north side of the garden. One possibility could be a moth or other insect flying close to the camera, though it does appear to be nearer the wall, 25 metres (82ft) away. Local ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) investigator Terry Hewitt, also present at the scene, wondered whether a greenhouse roof just behind the tree in question might have caused some form of reflection, but again we felt we were clutching at phantom straws. Pond mist was another possibility, but the nearest pond is a good 20 metres (65ft) east of the spot and the weather conditions weren't conducive. A mist that could travel so far while maintaining a loosely-elliptical form would be pretty phenomenal in itself anyway.

Appropriately, the early 18th century house is built on an old crossroads where, according to tradition, the bodies of those not fit for holy ground would be buried, along with vampires, so its long reputation for being haunted comes as no surprise. Just last Easter, gardener Mike Snuggs was chatting to colleagues in the main hall when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a lady in her fifties wearing a long, terracotta dress and black boots glide down the stairs.

When he turned around she was still there, looking out of a window onto the garden, before heading off towards the kitchen. "She felt friendly," he told *FT*, "and I got the impression she was pleased with the way the garden looked." Other members of staff, including Warburton, have heard mysterious footsteps in the upstairs rooms when there was nobody around. Assistants Jeannie Bilton and Emma Martin also both smelt the odour of bread, gingerbread and stewed plums wafting from the kitchen – which is no longer in use.

The footage is currently being studied more closely by video experts, but the museum staff are happy for anyone else with experience of security cameras or similar video anomalies to get in touch via *FT*. In the meantime, at least two paranormal investigation groups are planning vigils in the building. The staff remain unconcerned by its possible phantom occupants. "From our standpoint, it's done us good," said Warburton. "At the end of the day we're a museum and our role in this is to try to find an explanation for it. We need to check to see if our security system is functioning properly and report it if it's not. And if we can't explain it, well, that's fine too. It's a happy house, and no, we're not planning an exorcism." *Leicester Mercury*, 29 Jan; *D. Telegraph*, *D. Mail*, *Scotsman*, 3 Feb 1999.



THE CAMERA NEVER LIES?: (Left to right) Terry Hewitt (ASSAP), Stuart Warburton and Bill Garratt view the film.

# EXTRA EXTRA

HEADLINES FROM NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD

FUCHSIA TALKS  
Bristol Evening Post,  
21 Jan 1998.

PHANTOM ACTOR SUES  
Daily Telegraph,  
29 Jan 1998.

ALIENS ON 'STUDENT' VISA SLIP UNDER NET  
Brisbane (Australia) Courier-Mail,  
2 Feb 1998.

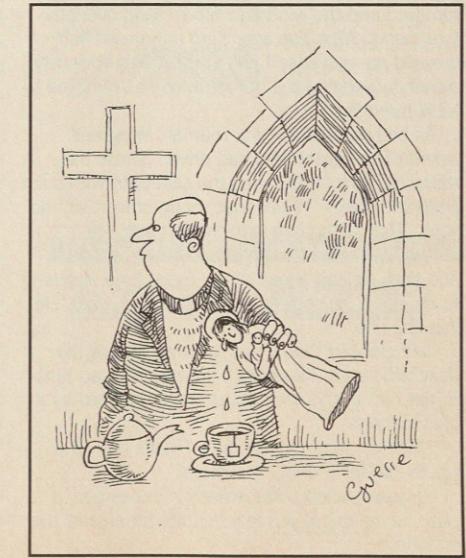
PUPILS TRAIN AS COUNSELLORS TO HELP UPSET CLASSMATES  
Times,  
5 Feb 1998.

HOSPITAL BAN ON BABIES  
Newark Advertiser,  
6 Feb 1998.

CABBAGE DICED IN SOCIAL UNREST  
The Australian,  
7-8 Feb 1998.

DEVIL'S HEAD FOUND IN BACK SEAT  
The Advertiser (South Australia),  
10 Feb 1998.

MICE BLAMED FOR MISSING DRINKS  
Wolverhampton Express & Star,  
12 Feb 1998.



GUERRE



# TALES FROM WORLD WAR II

From the land, sea and air battles of 1939–1945 come three tales of the mysterious and miraculous...

## THE SPECTRAL SAPPER

**IN JUNE 1942**, Rommel defeated the Eighth Army's armoured divisions at the Battle of Knightsbridge and Montgomery's forces had retreated, pursued by the Afrika Korps. Minefields, 300 to 400 yards wide, were laid at Alamein to stop the Germans sweeping east into Alexandria and Cairo. The sappers used stakes and tapes to mark out narrow zigzag paths between the mines for the stragglers from the

Knightsbridge defeat and, if all went well, for the Eighth Army to counter-attack. George Greenfield (left), a 25-year-old lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion, the Buffs, newly arrived from Britain, was stationed in the hills around the Qattara Depression, a natural obstacle of soft sand and rocks 30 miles (48km) south of Alamein. Lieut Wingfield's

platoon was ordered to take a squad and provide covering fire for sappers as they closed the minefield by removing the marker stakes and tapes and spreading barbed wire across the gaps at both ends. Arriving at the designated section of the front line, they found a young sapper officer who had just been killed by a German shell. His helmet had been blown off, revealing his sandy-blond hair. He was the only one caught out in the open; his men had been protected by their truck, which had taken most of the blast and the shell splinters. Orders were to hold the position until noon, even though the minefield had already been closed off because of sniper fire.

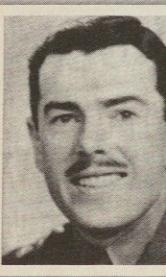
The deadline arrived and the soldiers were preparing to go when one of the Bren gunners saw a truck with British markings on the far side of the minefield. It was either a late straggler or an abandoned truck commandeered by Germans, so Wingfield told his men to be vigilant while he observed through field glasses. The front passenger, in British khaki, jumped out and removed the perimeter barbed wire. The truck then drove into the minefield at walking pace and followed the zigzag path, even though the markers had been removed and the wind had blown sand over any tyre marks. After five agonising minutes it had crossed no-man's-land and since it was obviously a friendly vehicle, the barbed wire was removed to let it through.

As he relates in his war memoir, Wingfield asked the sergeant who had driven across the minefield how he followed the safe path with such eerie accuracy. "It was that young officer, sir," he said. "That young one with the fair hair. He showed us where the track had been closed off and then walked ahead of us. Every time we came to an angle, he showed us which way it went. He was the one."

"He glanced round and saw the body of the dead officer on the ground. We had not had time to put him in the back of our truck, covered by a groundsheet."

"Christ!" said the sergeant. "That's him. But what's he doing dead over there?"

"He was killed about twenty minutes ago," I said. "Long before you reached the far side of the minefield."



In the rush to evacuate, Lieut Wingfield didn't have time to find out the dead officer's name, the identity of the sergeant or of the other nine soldiers in the truck. He took part in the decisive battle of Alamein in October 1942, and after the war ran the publishing house of T Werner Laurie before becoming a literary agent. Today, at the age of 81, he lives in retirement in Hampstead.

Newspaper advertisements placed by researchers for the BBC1 programme *Mysteries*, which featured the spectral sapper on 1 January 1998, failed to locate any of the other participants in the puzzling episode. If any reader has a lead, *FT* would be delighted to hear from you.

Sources: "Chasing the Beast (a war memoir)" by George Wingfield (Richard Cohen Books, 7 Manchester Sq, London W1M 5RE, 1998); *D.Mail*, 22 Nov; *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 Nov 1997.

## RETURN OF THE CATERPILLAR

**JOHN GIBSON, 81**, was a fighter ace in the Battle of Britain, and downed 14 German aircraft during his time with 501 Squadron. When he survived being shot down in a dogfight, he was admitted into the exclusive Caterpillar Club. Parachute makers Irvin presented him with a 22-carat gold brooch in the shape of a caterpillar. "I put it under my uniform lapel but then less that a fortnight later I was forced to bail out again, into the North Sea near Folkestone," he recalled. His uniform was sent for dry cleaning and came back without the caterpillar.

John Gibson moved to New Zealand and gradually forgot about the caterpillar. In 1989 he returned to England. One day in the summer of 1997, his friend Victor Tuska, 85, also a former RAF man, visited Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham, where he struck up a conversation with Ivor Thomas, 75. "We got chatting about the War," said Victor. "Ivor was in the Army. It was pure fluke that I happened to mention the name Gibson."

During the war, Ivor Thomas, 75, had worked for Eastman's dry cleaning business in Acton, west London, where he found the caterpillar brooch in August 1940. He gave it to his mother. "We always thought it belonged to Guy Gibson of the Dambusters and was worth a lot of money," he said. With the help of former 501 Squadron colleague Hugh Vernon, Messrs Gibson, Tuska and Thomas met at Ivor's house in July 1997, and the brooch was handed over. "There were times when I thought about selling it," he said. "But I'm so glad I didn't. It's back where it belongs now." *Nottinghamshire Post*, 24 July 1997.

The wreck of the *Perseus*, leaning slightly on its

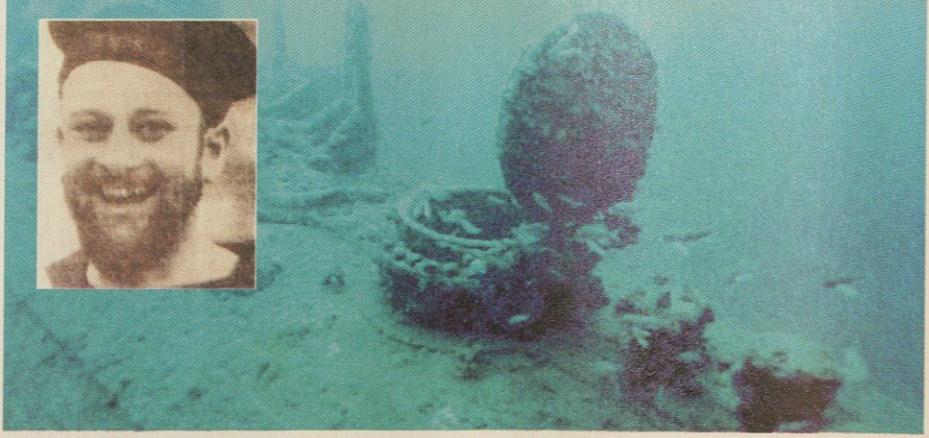
starboard side, was located last February with the aid of sonar by a six-member diving team headed by Kostas Thocharides. An Italian mine anchor near the wreck provided the answer to the submarine's sinking. Apart from a tear caused by the mine on its port side, the vessel is in perfect condition. Its gun and wheel on the bridge are still in place, while the compass still works. A hatch was open, as Capes had described, and an empty bottle of rum lay just inside the compartment. Inside the hatch Thocharides saw human bones, a now-empty boiler suit and three boots, indicating that at least two people had died in the compartment. The divers didn't enter the submarine as it is a war grave. *D.Telegraph*, 18 Feb 1998.

## ESCAPE FROM THE PERSEUS

**ON THE NIGHT** of 6 December 1941, the British submarine *Perseus* was shaken by a blast that ripped a hole in its bow. Minutes later, it lay on the seabed, with most of its 60 crew members dead. John Capes, 31, a stoker, survived by escaping through a hatch as the submarine lay 170ft (52m) underwater. He is the only person known to have escaped from a shipwreck at such a depth. In his report to the Royal Navy, Capes, who died 10 years ago, described how the compartment he was in near the submarine's stern flooded last, although the 2,040-ton *Perseus* had already settled on the seabed.

Capes was with three crewmen who were injured, and managed to open the hatch by activating an escape mechanism that flooded the compartment to equalise the pressure. After boosting their courage with a bottle of rum, Capes used a device known as the Davis Submerged Escape Apparatus to float himself and his three crewmates out of the submarine. However, there was no sign of the others when he surfaced. After swimming for several hours, he managed to reach the island of Caphalonia and collapsed on the shore near the village of Skalla, where he was found by residents the next day. They hid him from Italian and later German occupation forces until 31 May 1943, when he was smuggled by ship to Izmir, Turkey, and freedom.

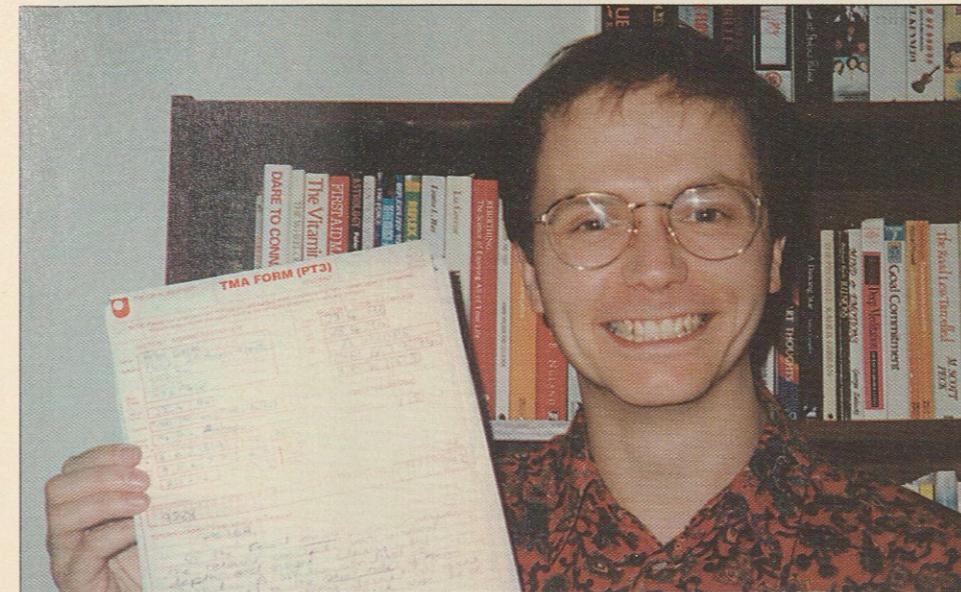
The wreck of the *Perseus*, leaning slightly on its



SUB-GENIUS: John Capes (inset) escaped from the open hatch which can be seen on the wreck of the *Perseus*.

# "I got 95% in a University essay – thanks to PhotoReading!"

A remarkable new technique is revolutionising studying. It enables anyone to mentally photograph the printed page at the rate of one page a second – writes Chris Payne.



Says Peter Barka: "I got 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course. All I did was PhotoRead the relevant chapters at the rate of one page a second – about 25,000 words per minute."

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT," said Peter Barka, who lives in Surbiton. "I opened up the envelope containing my marks for two Open University essays I wrote, and got a real shock. My tutor had awarded me 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course.

"What amazed me was that I was only expecting 65–70%, which I usually get for my essays. I hadn't done any background reading – I didn't get round to it in time – or the expected 15 hours a week study time!

"Yet my tutor wrote in his report: 'In the Freud essay you analysed the relevant concepts with unusual depth and insight. Clearly a pass 1 (95%).' A similar standard is maintained in the short notes questions. You have evidently gained a great deal of knowledge which will be of use throughout the course.'

## "I was shocked at the result"

"All I did was PhotoRead the relevant chapters on Freud and Piaget at the rate of one page a second – about 25,000 words per minute. Then, when I Rapid Read the chapters, I noticed that the text seemed to have a tinge of familiarity to it. I also PhotoRead some essay/thesis-writing guides.

"When I sat down and wrote the essay I felt I knew something about the subject. But after I wrote the essay I thought 'Oh my god, I'll probably do worse than last time when I got 73%', especially as I'm very left brain, and the subject matter was more right brained. How wrong I was!"

Peter was overjoyed on the day he got, for him, the unusually high marks: "I felt delirious, and I danced around like an idiot. I was just shocked at the result. I still feel quite shaky when I talk to my friends about the possibilities of PhotoReading."

## "I'm absolutely bowled over!"

Hilke Legenhausen, 27, and based in East Grinstead, earns her living as a translator. She spent a couple of weeks learning to PhotoRead, and then PhotoRead her German-English dictionary twice.

"The dictionary has 1,600 pages, so I PhotoRead the whole of it in about half an hour. I got my personal proof that the system works when I

## "PhotoReading is literally eye-opening"

Sheila Ostrander, co-author of the best-selling book SuperLearning 2000, is very enthusiastic about PhotoReading: "It's literally eye-opening. In a sense PhotoReading is a specialised case of SuperLearning. The same core techniques are evoked – being in the right state of body and mind, feeding data to and accessing it from the unconscious, dissolving learning blocks – but applied to reading instead of, say, language learning.

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Ostrander carries on: "Speed reading has been around and working for over half a century, yet it's still rarely used in business or education. PhotoReading is a much more organic system, which flows with the nature of our expanding view of ourselves. It may well be standard equipment for 21st century Superlearners."

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Ms Hilke Legenhausen: PhotoRead a German-English dictionary and "got personal proof that the system works".

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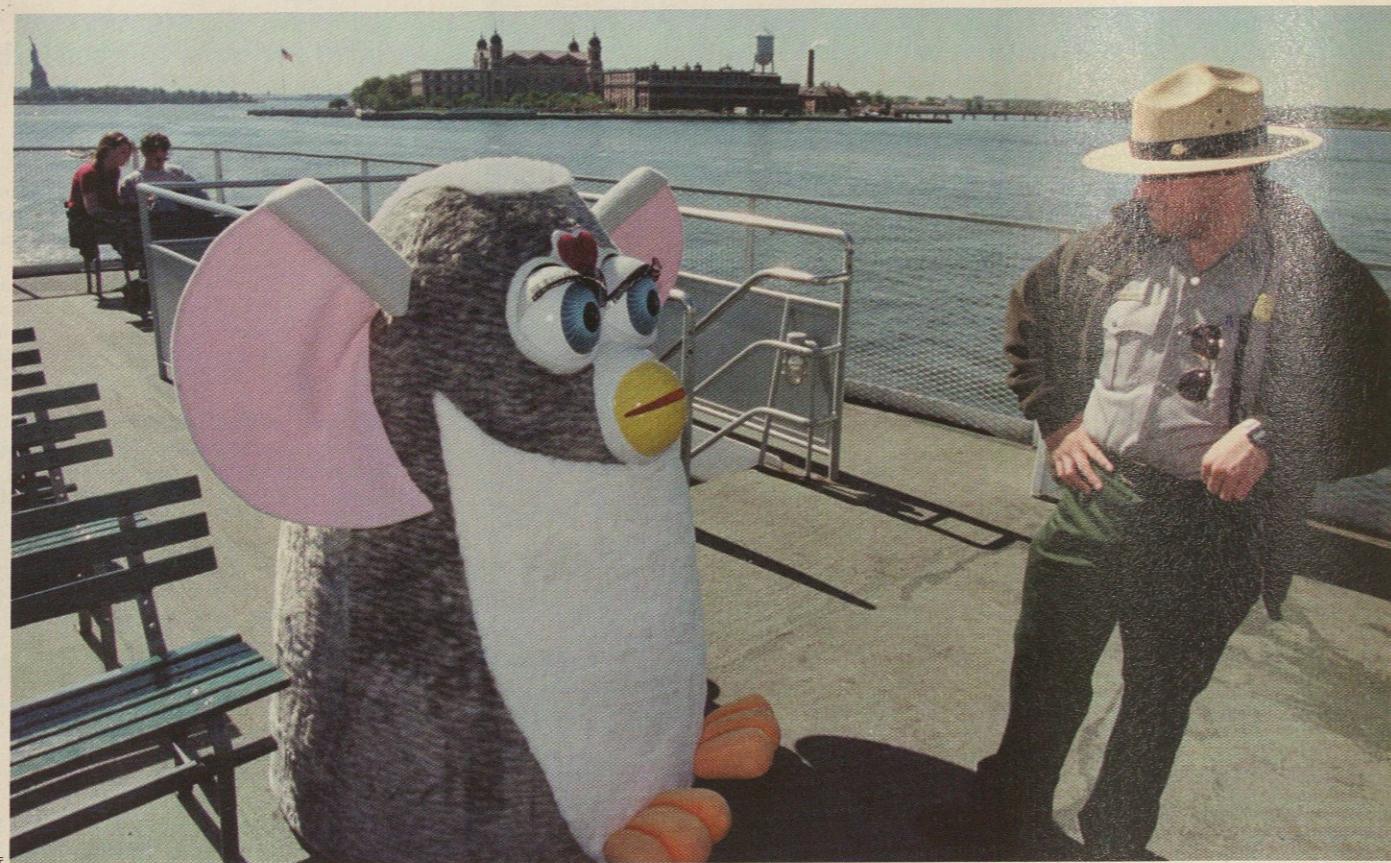
Please complete this coupon, or use plain paper  
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## classified - fur your eyes only

LAST CHRISTMAS'S HIT toys, Furby - fluffy, owl-faced, mogwai-like critters that use micro-chips and infrared technology to respond to touch, movement and sound - have been getting into trouble with the authorities. In January, the toys were banned from the Fort Meade, Maryland, HQ of America's super-secret National Security Agency (NSA), which monitors international communications. Officials feared that Furby may overhear sensitive security information and repeat it outside the building.

The \$30 toys can manage about 100 words of English and 100 in their own language, "Furby". The NSA Furby Alert reminded employees that: "Personally-owned photographic, video

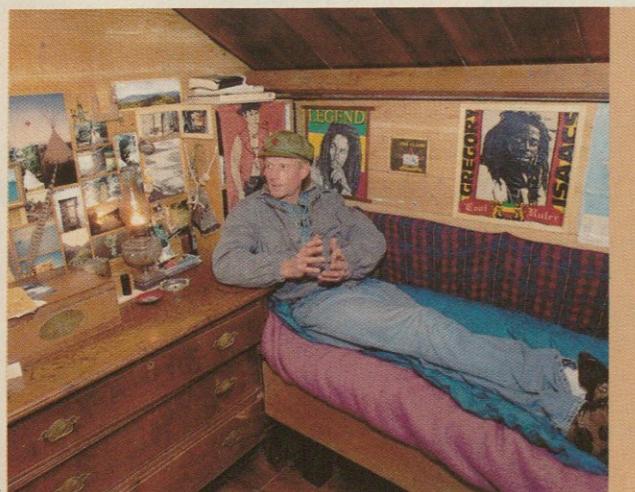
and recording equipment is prohibited. This includes toys such as Furby, with recorders that repeat the audio with synthesised sound to mimic the original signal. We are prohibited from introducing these items into NSA spaces."

The chattering furballs (usually smaller than the one above) have also been banned from GCHQ, Britain's spy base in Cheltenham, and from intensive care units at Glasgow's Yorkhill Children's Hospital until tests have been carried out to ensure that their hi-tech innards won't interfere with hospital equipment.

Meanwhile a rash of unexplained Furby deaths has been puzzling distressed owners both here and in the States. Spencer Kelly, a

DJ with Hampshire-based radio station Ocean FM, suggested that listeners place their Furby next to the radio to see if they could communicate with Lulu, his girlfriend's Furby, in the studio. Any listening Furby soon began to make a "funny noise" and were dead within minutes.

The experiment was repeated on the Mike Butts Morning Show in Rhode Island, USA, with the same results. Illinois-based manufacturers Tiger Electronics were puzzled: "It all sounds so bizarre. Furby communicate with each other using infra-red, so can only do so face-to-face." *Edinburgh Eve News*, 31 Dec 1998; *Guardian, Times*, 14 Jan; *D. Telegraph*, 14+20 Jan; *Glos. Echo*, 15 Jan 1999.



## going underground

LAST DECEMBER, A hunter stalking deer on Nantucket Island, off Cape Cod, spotted a black stovepipe poking from the ground. He found a hatch hidden by leaves, and beneath it the three-room home Thomas Johnson, 38, had made 8ft (2.4m) underground 10 years ago, to escape the corporate "vipers" and "clock-punching" consumers of American society.

A health inspector found the cedar-panelled dwelling to be a marvel of craftsmanship, but in breach of 23 regulations. He concluded that the cave, with its stove, pantry, bed and chest of draw-

ers, was unfit for human habitation. The local Boy Scout Association, which owns the land, served Mr Johnson with an eviction order despite its admiration for his backwoods skills. The Association faced possible prosecution if it allowed him to stay. Some locals think he should have been left in peace. A local doctor, Timothy Lepore, invited him to dig a new home on his land. The 6ft 4in (1.93m) Mr Johnson, a carpenter, said all he wanted to do was to commune with nature. "This is my self-help tank. I've gone to earth, almost like a seed, to re-germinate." *D. Telegraph*, 30 Dec 1998.

## WEIRD SCIENCE

**PAUL PARSONS** turns his telescope towards this month's collection of heavenly bodies. He can be contacted at [paparsons@pavilion.co.uk](mailto:paparsons@pavilion.co.uk).

### MARS ON ICE

Enthusiasts pushing for the human colonisation of Mars are planning to show the world just how feasible their plans are by living in a simulated Mars base, situated inside the inhospitable Arctic Circle. The Mars Society, headed by space engineer and author Robert Zubrin, is raising £600,000 for the six-person module which the society hopes will be up and running by the end of 2000. The simulated Martian habitat, known as the Mars Arctic Research Station (MARS), will be placed on Devon Island in the Arctic, where exterior conditions are believed to be very similar to those found on the Red Planet. *Frontiers*, Feb 1999.

### FLOAT ON

NASA is trying to build a flying saucer. Or, at least, build the propulsion system that might get one off the ground - the agency has just awarded two scientists a \$600,000 grant to try to build an antigravity machine. The researchers, Ronald Koczor and David Noever, both of NASA's Marshall Spaceflight Center, will try to replicate the earlier experiments of Russian materials scientist E E Podkletnov. Several years ago, Podkletnov described an experiment he claimed to have conducted in which a spinning, superconducting disc lost about two per cent of its weight. NASA is hoping antigravity could save millions in costly rocket launches. *New Scientist*, 6 Feb 1999.

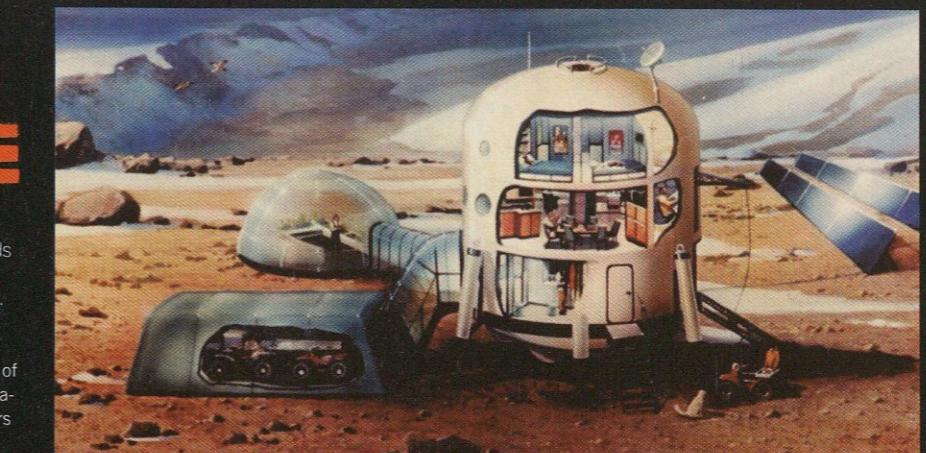
### WE'RE OVER HERE!

Houston-based company Encounter 2001 has picked up the phone to ET. On 14 March it beamed a signal into space, using a large radio telescope in the Ukraine. In 1974, Frank Drake, of the SETI Institute, California, beamed a similar signal toward the constellation Hercules using the 305m Arecibo radio dish in Puerto Rico. But scientists believe that interference from interstellar dust and starlight will render Drake's signal unreadable before it reaches its destination. The Encounter 2001 message is structured so that it can still be read even if some parts of it suffer from interference. *New Scientist*, 9 Jan 1999.

### WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

An American scientist claims he has figured out why we haven't been invaded by aliens yet. Extraterrestrial intelligent lifeforms, travelling at just 0.1 per cent of the speed of light, could explore the whole of our galaxy in about 100 million years. But the galaxy is roughly 10 billion years old, so where are they?

Now, James Annis, of the Fermilab laboratory, Chicago, says that in the past devastating blasts of energy called gamma-ray bursts regularly erased all life in the galaxy every few million years. Every time an intelligent civilisation



LIFE ON MARS: The mars Arctic Research Station will look very like this one planned for Mars itself.

began to emerge, it got knocked back and this is why we are yet to see ET, says Annis. *D. Telegraph*, 28 Jan 1999.

### WORLDS APART

An Earth-sized planet lying outside of our Solar System and capable of supporting life has been discovered by an international group of astronomers. The planet, situated 30,000 light years away near the middle of our galaxy, has a similar mass to the Earth and is orbiting its parent star at the right distance for life to flourish. The planet wasn't observed directly through a telescope, but was found instead using a technique called gravitational microlensing, which detects the distortion of light from a star caused by the gravity of any nearby planets. It's one of the first extrasolar planets that is similar to Earth. *Independent*, 13 Jan 1999.

### TACHYONS TO THE RESCUE

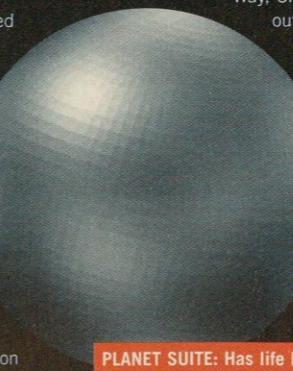
Strange subatomic particles called tachyons, that travel faster than light and backwards in time, are coming to the aid of physicists trying to work out what goes on at the heart of a black hole. Understanding the centre of a black hole requires a merger of the theories of quantum physics and relativity, which scientists are currently struggling to perform. Their best guess is an idea called M-theory, which describes particles as wiggling 'sheets' of energy. But M-theory fails to explain how particles can be absorbed by black holes. Now, two scientists at Princeton claim that M-theory works if the particles emit tachyons before they are swallowed up by a black hole. *New Scientist*, 9 Jan 1999.

### LIFE ON PLUTO?

Slightly closer to home than the centre of the Milky Way, Charon, the moon of icy

outer planet Pluto, may also harbour life, announced NASA scientists at the recent meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Anaheim. Charon was only discovered 20 years ago and is the latest object to come under the spotlight of

mirror matter. Every particle in our Universe, so the theory goes, has a mirror counterpart generated during the Big Bang. If the objects in the halo of our galaxy are mirror stars, as the researchers suspect, these objects may harbour mirror planets and perhaps even mirror lifeforms. *New Scientist*, 13 Feb 1999.



PLANET SUITE: Has life been found on icy Pluto?

NASA's \$20 million astrobiology programme. The discovery brings the total number of places in the Solar System where life either has evolved, or is suspected to have evolved, to five. The others are: Earth, Mars, Venus and Jupiter's moon Europa. *Times*, 8 Feb 1999.

### WE ARE STARDUST

The first space mission to capture samples of dust from a comet and then return them to Earth blasted off successfully on 6 February. The probe, called Stardust, will fly through the tail of comet Wild-2 in 2004, scooping up samples of cometary dust. In 2006, Stardust will pass by the Earth and drop the capsule containing the dust samples back into our atmosphere, where it will parachute safely to the ground. Comets may have brought to Earth the micro-organisms which seeded life on the planet, an idea which Stardust mission scientists hope to examine when the samples are returned. *D. Telegraph*, 4 Feb 1999.

### LET THERE BE... DOH!

A recent attempt by Russian space scientists to place a light in the sky brighter than the full moon went catastrophically awry. The Russians were planning to mount a giant mirror, called Znamya (meaning banner), on the Mir space station. The mirror was to reflect light from the Sun down onto North America, Europe and Russia, so brightening up the three-month-long dark of the Arctic winter. Astronomers complained that light pollution from the mirror would affect ground-based telescopic observations. But their fears were allayed when the mirror failed to deploy correctly, snagging on an antenna. The wrecked Znamya was later released into the atmosphere, where it burned up. *D. Telegraph*, 4, 5, 6 Feb 1999.

### MIRROR, MIRROR

A strange kind of material from a hitherto undiscovered region of the Universe could be inhabiting the outer reaches of our galaxy. A group of physicists from America and Australia say that invisible lumps of matter in the Milky Way's outer 'halo' - seen only by the effect of their gravity on passing starlight - could be made of so-called mirror matter. Every particle in our Universe, so the theory goes, has a mirror counterpart generated during the Big Bang. If the objects in the halo of our galaxy are mirror stars, as the researchers suspect, these objects may harbour mirror planets and perhaps even mirror lifeforms. *New Scientist*, 13 Feb 1999.



# ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER  
with the latest  
from planet  
cryptozoology



## GOING FOR A SONG?

In what is apparently a first for ornithology, the legal right to name a newly-discovered species of bird is to be sold by auction to the highest bidder. It was discovered by avian expert Bret Whitney, co-owner of a nature tour company based in Austin, Texas, during a recent expedition to western Brazil.

Whitney donated his right to name the species to the Texas Audubon Society, which will stage the auction as part of its planned centenary celebrations later this year. All proceeds from the auction will be used for bird conservation in Texas and Brazil. *Nando Media/AP, 15 Feb 1999*

## REBORN IN THE SOUTH

South Australia has recently hosted the discovery of a bird species never previously reported within its borders, and also the rediscovery of a mysterious lizard last seen here back in 1934. A colony of spinifex birds *Eremiornis carteri*, a small brown warbler-like species, was spotted last year in the far north of the state by scientists participating in the Biological Survey of South Australia, a major wildlife project funded by this state's government.

The lizard, *Egernia kintorei*, a species of skink known locally as the tjukura, was found following a diligent search for it in their lands by the Pitjantjatjara aborigines, within whose mythology this reptile features extensively, despite being 'lost' for over 60 years. *Adelaide Advertiser, 9 Jan 1999*.

## KEEPING UP WITH THE KAPRE

On 12 March 1999, Californian Bigfoot researcher Bobbie Short plans to fly to Manila, to seek evidence for the existence of one of Bigfoot's less familiar relatives, a Filipino bipedal man-beast known as the *kapre*.

Reported from the islands of Luzon and Samar, and said to stand up to 8ft (2.4m) tall, the *kapre* is covered with hair but has a human-like face, hands, and feet. Seemingly omnivorous, it is

# don't talk to strangers

A PANIC HAS been spreading across Ireland. In October and November, gardai received 38 reports of attempts to lure children into vans; 27 of these were in the Dublin area and the rest around the country – Portlaoise, Mullingar, Mountmellick, Monasterevin, Thurles, Dundalk, Dunboyne, Drogheda, Portarlington, Limerick city, and Cork (where three incidents occurred). By Christmas, the number of reports had risen to 50. In Cavan, two nine-year-old girls had to scream and struggle to escape when they were snatched on the steps of their primary school by a "weird-looking" man.

Dan Neville, Fine Gael's spokesman on children, gave voice to a widespread rumour that the culprits were child-sex abusers who had fled the UK following the introduction of the paedophile register. While it is impossible to prove than none of these incidents took place, a certain element of mass hysteria seemed to be involved. For example, a 13-year-old girl reported people staring at her at traffic lights; while a parent waiting outside a school was reported for looking at another child.

In the *Donegal People's Press* in February, gardai warned teenagers and young women to be "extra vigilant" after dark and said that "since before Christmas", the number of reported attempted abductions around Letterkenny had shown a dra-

matic increase. In the *Midland Tribune*, the perpetrators of two alleged harassment incidents were men in jeeps, who jumped out and approached the girls they had been following. The *Bray People* said that gardai were investigating seven attempted abductions in the Bray area and 90 across the state, but suggested that there were far more incidents. The paper said it had had a "flurry of calls from readers who claimed they had knowledge of other similar incidents which had not been reported to the gardai."

On 16 December, a teenage boy was approached in Co Wicklow, and 'begged' to accompany a middle-aged man to Bray, seven miles (11km) away, in his gold-coloured hatchback car. On 6 January, three young girls narrowly avoided being taken into a white van in Co Wexford; and the next day there were two attempted abductions in Co Offaly, both involving a white van with English number plates.

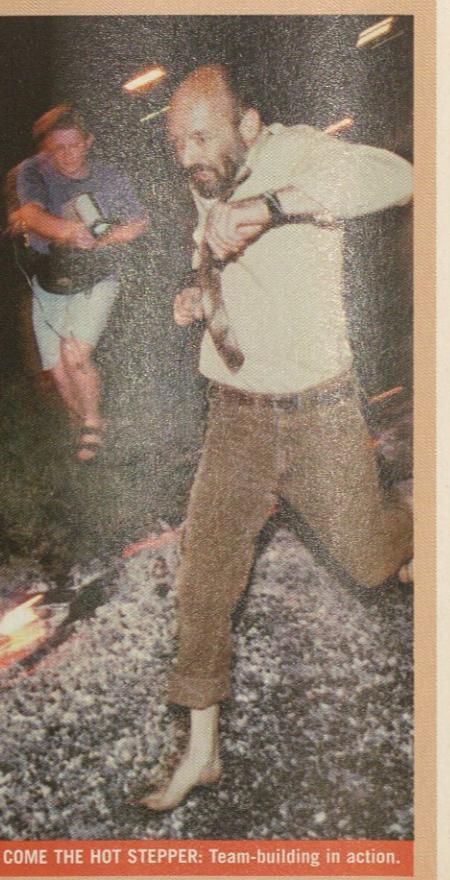
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## sole survivors

SEVEN TRAINEE CLIENT advisors – six men and one woman from life assurance company Eagle Star Life – were hospitalised when a motivational fire-walking exercise went awry. The incident took place on 9 July 1998 in the grounds of the Moat House hotel in Brockworth, Gloucestershire, at the end of a day of bonding and 'team building' for 10 new managers organised by Infinite Breakthrough Technologies. It was intended to be the climax of their nine-month training period. Although the fire-walking was not compulsory, everyone took part, even after seeing their colleagues getting burnt. Tewkesbury Council decided not to prosecute Eagle Star or the event's organisers, though they did issue a warning.

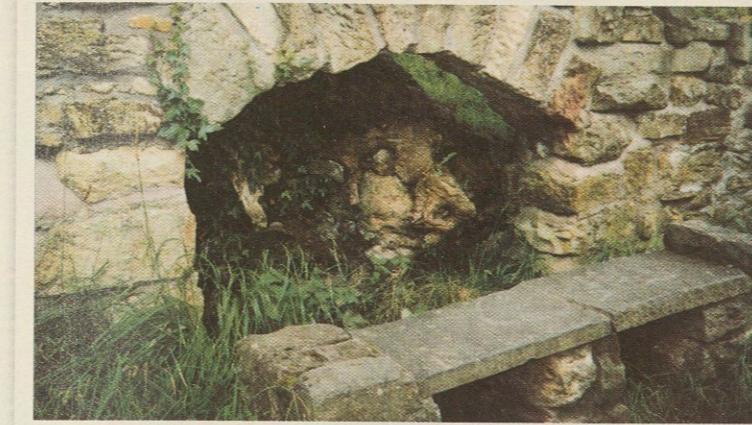
Apparently, the course was running late and not enough time was allowed for the coals to cool before the gung-ho trainees were let loose onto them. The coals were laid out on a 4ft (122cm) metal tray, which may have heated up, adding to the trauma. Two of the participants' feet were so badly burnt that they were taken to a specialist burns unit at Frenchay Hospital in Bristol, 40 miles (64km) away. Staff there are quoted as saying: "We have not had to deal with a burns problem as strange as this since a group of people got dressed up as sheep for a fancy dress party and got burned with super glue after trying to stick cotton wool on to themselves."

Fire-walking is thought to be possible because wood is a poor conductor of heat and, as long as one walks quickly enough over it, the soles of the feet are unlikely to sustain any damage. *Mail 14 July; The Citizen (Glos) 14 July 1998, 16 Jan 1999*.



HERE COME THE HOT STEPPERS: Team-building in action.

## SIMULACRACORNER



THIS TROLL WAS SPOTTED UNDER A BRIDGE BETWEEN ROSSLYN CHAPEL AND ROSSLYN CASTLE, SOUTH OF EDINBURGH, AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY OTIS CRANDELL OF EDINBURGH IN THE SUMMER OF 1997. IT IS ACTUALLY THE BASE OF A VERY LARGE TREE.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the editorial post box (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) and we'll pay five pounds or 10 dollars for any we use.

## anthrax anxiety in the air

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WAS hit late last year by a spate of anthrax scares, with police called out to at least seven alleged attacks in December alone. On Christmas Eve, a department store in Palm Desert, near Palm Springs, received a telephone warning about anthrax spores in the air. About 200 people were herded into the parking lot, ordered to remove their clothes, and hosed down with a bleach solution. Firemen had to construct makeshift shower facilities with tarpaulins and provide people with clothing after their rinsing.

More than 750 people were detained in the small hours of 27 December in the Glass House night-club in the Los Angeles suburb of Pomona, after an anonymous caller told police there was a "significant amount" of the bacteria in the club. Police accompanied by a hazardous material team and members of the FBI's domestic terrorism task force tested the air, filters and ducts in the club and searched the patrons, who were sent home with instructions to take a shower, pack their clothes in sealed plastic bags and report any symptoms.

Anthrax poisoning usually shows up in two to six days with flu-like symptoms, and it can kill by attacking the respiratory system. No one has reported sick and all the reports are believed to have been false alarms. The first came when a secretary of the Perris school district offices in Riverside county opened a letter that said: "You've been exposed to anthrax." About 20 people were isolated and decontaminated.

On 2 January, students and staff at a high school in Anaheim, California, were placed in quarantine for three hours following a hoax anthrax threat, and a public library in Oregon was closed for the same reason on 14 January. A total of some 3,000 people have been affected in California, while anthrax threats have also been reported in Colorado, Kentucky and Tennessee. Nationwide, the FBI have investigated more than two dozen recent anthrax threats.

## ALIEN ZOO



CONTINUED

particularly fond of fruit such as mangoes, pineapples and papayas, as well as fish, land crabs, and even the local rats.

The Philippines have a history of man-beast legends and lore, as previously documented by Mark A Hall (*Wonders*, Sept 1993). *NewsFlash Service, 24 Feb 1999*.

## A GREYER SHADE OF BLACK

Despite countless reports of such felids, not a single specimen of a black puma has ever been obtained and conclusively identified in North America. Hence I was very interested to learn a while ago from correspondent Keith Foster that he planned to investigate reports that a black puma had been killed in Oklahoma back in the 1970s.

True to his word, Keith did indeed investigate, but hopes of a cryptozoological scoop were foiled when he discovered that the specimen in question had actually been grey, not black. Nevertheless, this is at least one such case that has been thoroughly investigated and can now be eliminated from any further consideration – a worthwhile achievement in itself. *Keith Foster, personal communication, 1 Feb 1999*.

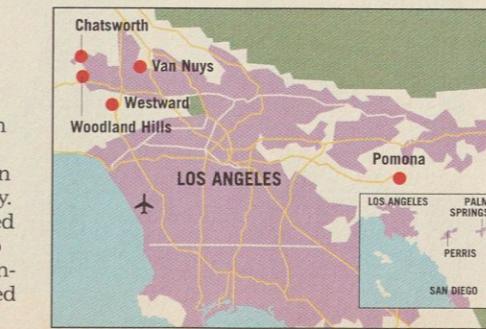
## THINK PINK

The cz@onelist cryptozoology discussion group has yielded some fascinating snippets of previously-overlooked or little-publicised data since its establishment last year.

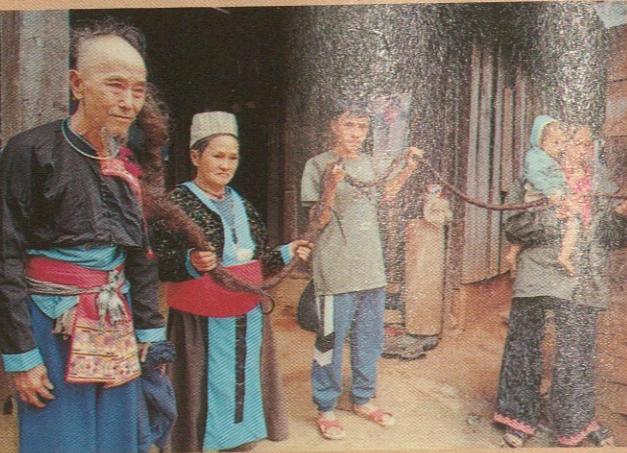
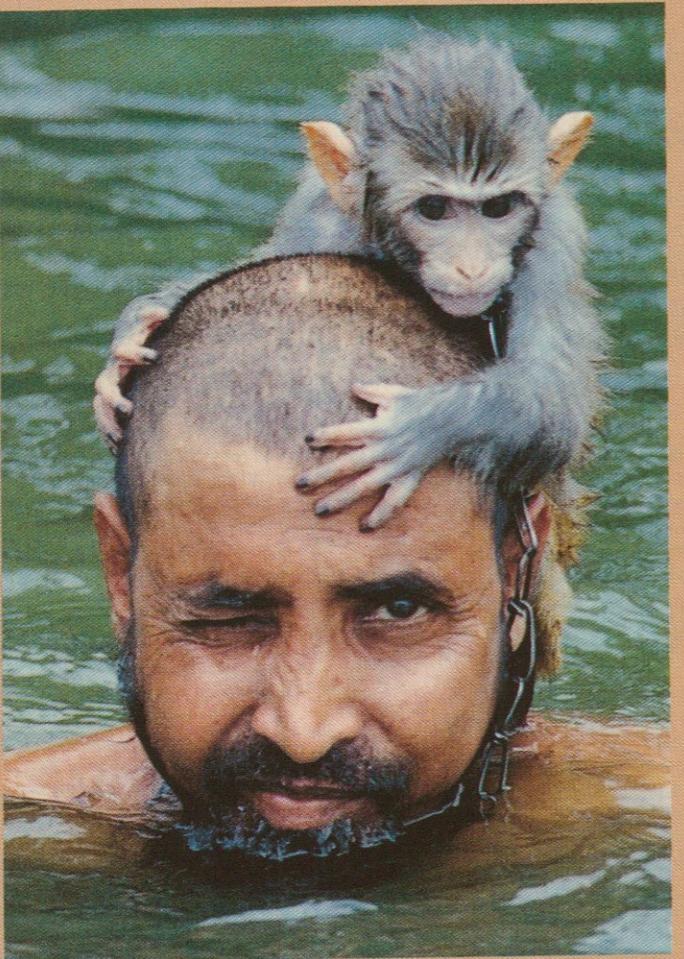
One of the latest stems from the online revelation by cryptozoological researcher Richard Muirhead that Edward Schafer's book *The Vermilion Bird* (1967), concerning life in T'ang Dynasty China (618-907 AD), refers to a race of black elephants with small pink tusks in Hsun and Lei, corresponding to the Leizhou Peninsula and southeastern Guangxi Province.

It appears that this peculiar form of pachyderm has been formally dubbed *Elephas maximus rubridermis* by zoologist Dr P E P Deraniyagala, who used as his type specimen a depiction published in 1925 of an antique Chinese bronze statuette, held at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History.

Can FT readers supply any further details re these elephantine enigmas? If so, you know where to write. Assorted cz@onelist communications, Feb-Mar 1999.



## three stories full of eastern promise



POPPERFOTO/REUTERS

### saving the monkey

A MAN CARRIES his pet monkey on his head while swimming in flood waters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 10 August 1998. The floods had already killed more than 300 people. *Irish Times*, 11 Aug 1998.

### better luck

THE WORLD'S SHORTEST woman, Madge Bester (second right) being kissed by Taiwan's shortest man, Lin Yih-chih (right) in Taiwan on 2 November. Ms Bester, 23.6in (60cm) tall, created the Glass Doll Club in Taipei for people suffering from bone deformities.

Also in the picture are Taiwan's shortest women, sisters Tsai Mei-ling and Tsai Shu-huei. *IRI Hong Kong Standard*, 3 Nov 1998.



POPPERFOTO/REUTERS

HU SENG LA, a 77-year-old sorcerer from the Hmong hill tribe in northern Thailand, shows off his 17ft (5m) hair, which he last cut 55 years ago. The hair is washed every December to ensure good luck. This involves his seven children, gallons of water and at least 10 bottles of shampoo. A museum in

When she was last seen, Mrs O'Hair was 77 and suffering from diabetes and heart disease. Shortly before they vanished on 29 September 1995, Jon transferred \$600,000 from a bank account in New Zealand and used it to buy gold coins from Cory Ticknor, a jeweller in San Antonio, Texas. Jon collected only \$500,000 worth of coins; the remainder were seized later by the Internal Revenue Service, which was seeking \$1.5 million in back taxes from Jon and Robin.

Jon's Mercedes was sold on 5 September 1995 for \$5,000 below the current market value by a man who claimed to be Jon but didn't fit his description. The O'Hairs have a bank account, registered in their names at Frost Bank in San Antonio; this contains \$23,765 and has not been touched in the last three years. Similarly, five New Zealand bank accounts, all in Jon's name and containing a total of \$150,000, have not been touched. The passports of all three O'Hairs were left behind, and all Madalyn's medicine was found in the family's refrigerator.

When the trio left Austin in August 1995, they put their three dogs in Griffith Small Animal Hospital in northwest Austin. In mid-December, Jon and Robin's dogs, cocker spaniels called Gannon and Shannon, disappeared from a locked, fenced enclosure behind the atheist HQ. Madalyn's terrier, Gallagher, was left behind. In October 1996, Robin's Porsche was found abandoned in the airport at Austin.

David Waters, office manager at the atheist HQ in 1993 and 1994, is sure that the O'Hairs had long been planning their disappearance. In May 1995, he had pleaded

## O'HAIR LOSS CAUSING CONCERN

**Paul Sieveking** examines the mysterious disappearance of atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair...

People go missing every day, but few make the headlines. Of these, only the most prominent are remembered for years, provoking endless speculation – Ambrose Bierce (1913), Victor Grayson (1920), Percy Fawcett (1925), Joseph Crater (1930), Amelia Earhart (1937), Lord Lucan (1974), and Jimmy Hoffa (1975). The disappearance in 1995 of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, along with her son Jon Garth Murray and granddaughter Robin Murray O'Hair (who was also, confusingly, her adopted daughter) seems set to join the select few – definitely a story with legs.

Madalyn O'Hair, president of American Atheist Inc, was probably the most famous atheist in the world 30 years ago. In 1960 she had sued Baltimore school district to remove prayer from schools, leading to the Supreme Court's 1963 banning of prayer and Bible reading in state schools across America. "Religion is the most monstrous idea in the world," she wrote in 1979. "It must be killed without quarter along with fascism, racism, sexism, war and slavery. All those ideas are nuts, and mankind must get over them."

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GONE: Madalyn Murray O'Hair (centre) with her son Jon and adopted daughter Robin at an anniversary celebration in June 1988 of the 1963 court decision outlawing school prayer. All three vanished in September 1995.

guilty to stealing \$54,000 from the O'Hairs. He also had previous convictions for murder, battery and forgery. A conman called Danny Ray Fry moved from Florida to Austin in July 1995 to work with Waters. His last recorded call was made from Waters' Austin apartment at 2.47pm on Saturday, 30 September, when he called his daughter during her 16th birthday party in Florida and told her he would be home the following Tuesday. It was the day after Jon Murray made his last phone call from San Antonio to the atheist HQ in Austin. Fry was never seen again.

No evidence of foul play has been discovered in the disappearance of the Murray O'Hairs. Private investigators hired by the press and former TV talk show host Phil Donahue have drawn a blank, as have detectives with the Austin Police Department. However, a macabre clue has just been identified. On 2 October 1995, a man collecting tin cans among the rubbish, ants and poison ivy on the banks of the Trinity River near Seagoville in southeastern Dallas County came upon the nude body

"THE VATICAN DID IT – OR THE CIA – AND COVERED IT UP"

of a man with head and hands missing, laid out on its back with the legs neatly together and arms splayed. "It certainly was a cocky bastard who did this. The way they laid him out was like, 'Come and find us,'" said Robert Bjorklund, a local detective who reviewed more than 200 missing person cases in an effort to identify the victim. "Why didn't they dump him in the water? It would have been a whole lot harder to find."

A few months ago, the *San Antonio Express-News* suggested that the body

might be that of Danny Fry. DNA tests, using blood supplied by Fry's brother, ex-wife and son, were compared with a sample taken before the body went to a pauper's grave. Confirmation that it was the Florida conman came in mid-January 1999.

Given the publicity and the fact that all three missing atheists had appeared on television, it's thought unlikely that they could simply relocate and not be recognised. Despite the lack of physical evidence, the people who have spent the most time investigating the case believe the Murray O'Hairs are dead.

Others, however, think the trio are holed up in some obscure foreign location to escape the IRS. Detective Stephen Baker of San Antonio believes they changed their names, got new passports and left the country. He has had reports of Madalyn sightings in Romania and New Zealand. However, if they are still alive, why haven't they drawn on the funds in New Zealand? There again, perhaps Madalyn died (she was old and ill) while the other two made a run for it. This would explain why only two of the dogs went missing.

"I think my mother was kidnapped, Robin was taken along to take care of her, and my brother was run like a wet mule to get the kidnap money together," said Bill Murray, Madalyn's other son, who has become a born-again Christian. "I absolutely believe that is what happened."

Or perhaps they were murdered. Arnold Via, a close atheist friend of Madalyn's, told the press in 1996: "Off the wall, I claim the Vatican did it – the Vatican or the CIA. Someone with enough clout to cover it up." *San Antonio (TX) Express News*, 1 Feb, 16 Aug 1998, 31 Jan 1999; *Austin (TX) American Statesman*, 2 Feb, 18 Aug, 23 Sept, 15 Oct 1998, 10+24 Jan, 1 Feb 1999; *Austin Chronicle*, 20 Nov 1998, 8 Jan 1999.



# FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

When somebody invites you on an exorcism, what can you do but agree to go along? **Mark Pilkington** took the bait and met with some spirited mediums.

## THE MEDIUMS AND THE MESSAGE

*"I can see your guide now. You've got an Arab – his name's Kahmel and he's been with you about 17 years. He's very strong and heals you sometimes because you get very tired."*

I'm at home with Gary Stock, medium and freelance exorcist. Also present, other than Kahmel, are Gary's mum Beryl; Northampton-based author, psychic and investigator Natalie Osborne-Thomason; her spirit guide Vera; and photographer Patrick Leonard.

Gary has summoned us to Plumstead to visit the ruins of Lesnes Abbey, a 12th century monastery in nearby Abbey Wood. He's heard tell of a headless monk seen in the area at Hallowe'en and feels that an exorcism may be required. This isn't your usual Hollywood-style jamboree, mind you; no masses will be read, no bells, books or candles brandished against the forces of darkness. Gary's technique is far less confrontational. The spirit is probably stuck in the limbo between this world and the next – or "the light" as Gary and Natalie refer to it.



ABBEY NATIONAL: Medium Gary Stock (top) claimed to see brown-robed monks in the grounds of Lesnes Abbey.

a different level of vibration. You can't see it, it's just there, like radio or TV signals, and some people can pick them up."

For both, there came a specific moment in their lives when they could no longer ignore what was happening to them. Natalie's abilities were dramatically enhanced after the birth of her first daughter at the age of 18. "One time I was on holiday in Jersey and heard a woman's voice saying 'check the baby', so I ran into the hotel room and there was my daughter in her cot with a plastic bag over her head. I lived at that time in a house that was terribly haunted; objects would move around, I heard voices, there were unnatural cold spots. I gradually realised I might be psychic and spoke to a medium, who encouraged me to develop my skills."

For Gary, the turning point came with the experiences of his mother Beryl, who is clearly troubled as she relates the tale: "Back in 1985, I was getting black figures, bad energies, I was really frightened. They were pulling the covers off me at night. There was the mad dog, the serpent. One time I woke up and there was a ball bouncing. It had big teeth and bit my arm and I was screaming. I was put on

temazepam for two years, and I wasn't sleeping. I ended up in Maudsley Hospital for a week. When I came out, I'd had enough and was ready to commit suicide. Then Gary performed a blessing and an exorcism, and I've not had any problems since."

Gary puts the experiences down to spirits attracted to Beryl's room when his sister and a friend used a Ouija board inside it. Whatever we make of this story, it's clear that Gary, who's extremely close to Beryl – they still live together – was able to help her get through these difficult times, and ultimately that's what counts.

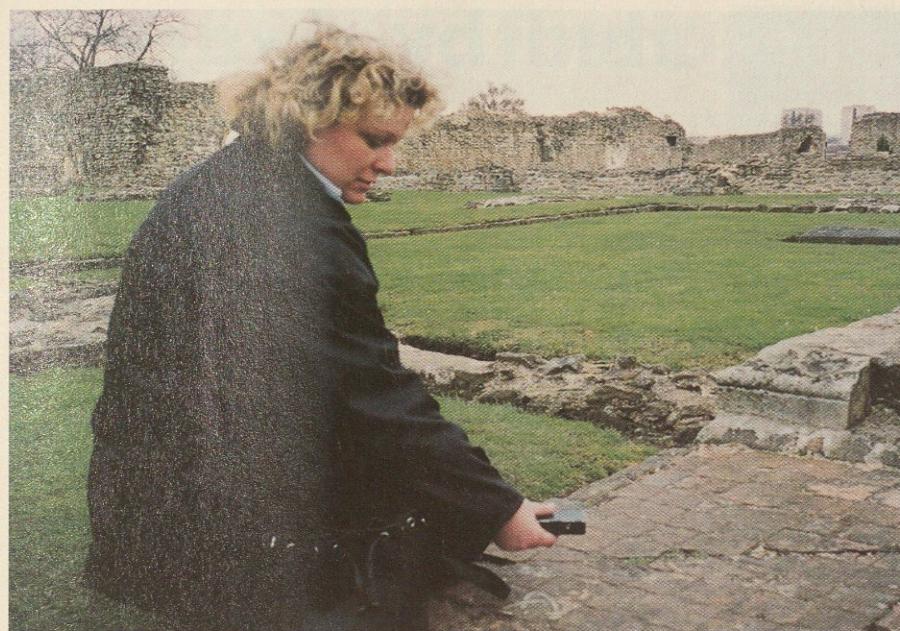
So how do they envision the spirit world? "It exists alongside our own at a different level of vibration," Natalie explains matter-of-factly. "It's composed of thought, so the spirits don't have bodies like us. They have no perception of time, their time runs at a different rate from ours." Many UFO contactees make similar statements about their alien friends. Whitley Strieber, for example, repeatedly points out that the entities he encounters exist "outside of time".

Personally uncomfortable with the notion of a world of spirit, especially one that allows its occupants, as Gary says, to "know everything that's going on", I wonder what role telepathy plays in the claims of the mediums. Are they working an afterlife mythology around their innate telepathic abilities? Gary is certain on this point: "I'm not a psychic, I'm a clairvoyant – I only work directly with spirit."

Natalie partly agrees, though she too is adamant about the spirit side of things: "I think that I use it [telepathy] a lot without realising it, that's how I get a lot of information. Some of it is clever guesswork, some of it might be psychic ability, and some of it is spirit intervention. The human consciousness survives death, I'm sure of that. Consciousness is always there, like physicists say, energy is never lost, it just turns



MARK PILKINGTON



IMPULSE CONTROL: Natalie Osborne-Thomason uses an electromagnetic field detector in the abbey grounds.

into something else. Personally I get most of my information from a spirit called Vera, who I do think is a real woman, from Brooklyn, New York. I've not yet tried to find her birth or death records, but I'd like to. Vera tells me things about people – things that are going to happen, things that have happened. It's like having a friend at your side the whole time."

So what about bad spirits? Gary clearly enjoys adding a bit of the old Dennis Wheatley: "Some souls won't accept that they're dead and that they've got to cross over to the other side, especially if they die young, or in tragic or unexpected circumstances. They're not demons, just mischievous. But I have had spirits push me around, pulling my hair. Sometimes you just can't breathe, it takes your breath away. It can be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing."

"It's the minority that are malevolent," stresses Natalie. "It's fear that causes more harm than the entities themselves. But I have been into buildings and felt physically sick. I've also come across people who are possessed by a bad spirit, but they might not realise it. If you've got good intentions, you'll attract friendly, helpful spirits. But it's easy to go off on the wrong track. Like Aleister Crowley – I reckon he was a gifted medium, but he took the wrong path and attracted bad entities."

While certain facets of being in tune with spirit or psychically gifted may seem appealing, many mediums, as Natalie points out, pay a hefty price for their gifts: "Most mediums are unhappy and overweight, I don't know why. I think it may be a metabolic thing. I suffer from thyroid problems, so maybe it's do with having a slow metabolism. My abilities also seem to be stronger at times of adversity, like when I'm unhappy. If I could swap them for a normal, healthy life I would."

There are no ghosts today, but she does get the impression that herbs were important to the monks here. A lucky guess per-

haps, but this is confirmed later in the abbey information centre – which Natalie swears not to have entered while Gary and I did the rounds. The Abbey was indeed home to a noted herbalist, Prior William Buyse, who grew medicinal and culinary plants on the grounds. But Gary's monks, Brothers Tim and Simon, prove to be unlikely inhabitants – these monks were of the Augustine Order, widely known as the "Black Canons" for their black robes.

The ill vibes sensed by Gary may not be entirely imaginary, however. A passing park assistant, Steve Pearce, tells us he's aware of at least three ghosts that have been sighted in the grounds, by visitors and staff. As well as the famous headless monk, there's young Roeisa of Dover, great granddaughter of Abbey founder Richard de Lucy. Her mummified heart was buried in the grounds by her father and removed earlier this century by archaeologists. She now returns to the Abbey from the woods behind, in search of her missing organ.

A troop of cavaliers on horseback has also been spotted coming down the hill behind the ruins, reportedly leaving hoof prints behind. Interestingly, the Abbey's well used to be located in this area – underground streams are often connected to ghostly apparitions. Being open all night, the Abbey grounds have also seen their fair share of witchy goings-on. Apart from finding the odd wax-covered, makeshift altar, one afternoon Steve saw a woman with long, black hair spinning round in circles and muttering, crows circling above her head. A quizzical blackbird looks up at us; "Oh don't worry about him, he follows people everywhere."

Natalie remains pragmatic: "I've been to plenty of other monasteries and felt things, but there was nothing there today. People want to see something, so they do." Gary agrees. "Yeah, it's like Brother Tim said: 'Don't believe all that you hear.'"



MARK PILKINGTON

## BROTHER TIM'S WORDS OF CAUTION

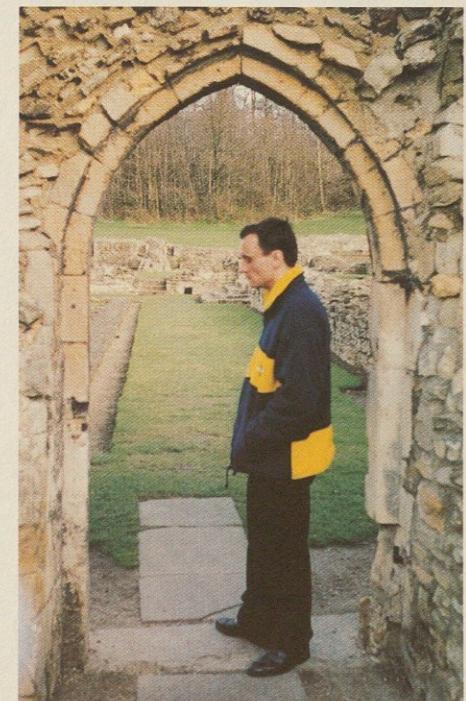
We eventually make our way down to the impressive Abbey ruins. As children play on the crumbling walls, there's no hint of the unease Gary had anticipated. We decide that I should accompany the two mediums around the location one at a time, to see what they pick up, Gary first. Rolling a cigarette as we walk, he lets loose a heavy flow of stream-of-consciousness imagery.

"Brother Simon is coming through, he's unhappy about black witchcraft practised here in the 1950s... a monk was beheaded here, he was caught with a woman and sentenced to death... they were very Victorian in those times." Now and again he'll pause in a spot and stare vacantly into space. Try as I might, I can sense no change in the atmosphere as the spirit forms manifest for Gary.

"Brother Tim is here now, in a brown robe and open leather sandals. 'Don't believe all that you hear', he's saying." On our rounds we encounter more disconsolate monks and learn that several children were buried here during the plague in the late 18th and early 19th century. I remember what Natalie had said earlier, about time in the spirit world.

Natalie is more restrained in her appraisal. "No, I don't sense any spirits here. I don't think it's haunted." As well as relying on her senses in her work as a psychic investigator, Natalie carries an electromagnetic field detector. It's a small black box with one green and one red LED and an antenna sticking out the top. "You tend to find strange things do happen in areas with strong electrical fields. Stone can store images and some ghosts are no more than holograms – you walk right through them."

There are no ghosts today, but she does get the impression that herbs were important to the monks here. A lucky guess per-



LOST ARCH: Gary sensed quite a number of spirits.

MARK PILKINGTON



## frog wins lottery



LUCKY: Could this frog help you win the lottery?

**ONE DAY IN JANUARY**, Liliana Artega noticed a frog in her garden. "There were some purplish markings on one leg," said her son Carlos. He interpreted these to form a string of numbers – 8794. The same numbers were called in the local lottery draw and on 23 January Ms Artega won £50,000.

It was the second fortune-bearing bullfrog to hit the Colombian town of San Juan de Acosta in the last six months, setting the population into a frenzy of frog-hunting. People remember a similar case in 1995, when a sea bass brought the banana port of Turbo a £300,000 bonanza after 300 residents bet on the numbers 1124 which appeared under the scales of the bass at the village market. The payout bankrupted the lottery.

The phenomenon of seeking keys to lottery wins from non-human sources might be an example of a long-lost concept in Western thought, according to anthropologist Maria Uribe. "Maybe seeing is not believing but vice versa," she said. "You can't see unless you believe. Accept that, and reality has few bounds." *Guardian*, 25 Jan 1999.

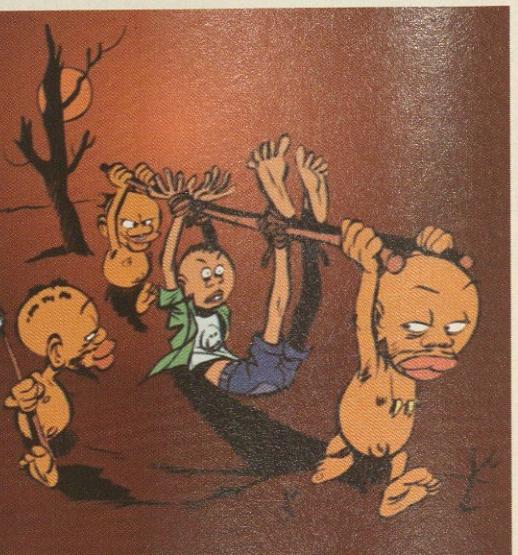
## snatched by dwarves

**ON 16 NOVEMBER 1998**, Kwame Afram, 13, joined three other labourers on the farm of Kofi Kodua at Obokumanoma, near Kumana in Ghana, to help with the Yam harvest. Feeling hungry at 1pm, he asked permission to go home and set off in advance of the others. As he reached the main road, he saw three giants sitting with their legs across the road and their heads bowed down. To avoid being seen, Kwame took off into the bush, intending to join the main road elsewhere.

Kodua and the other labourers followed a few minutes later, calling for Kwame without response. When the boy was found to be missing, Kodua organised a search party to comb the bush, but without success. That evening, the matter was reported to the police, who organised their own search party, again without success.

Local fetish priests asked Kwame's family to perform certain rituals, which they did. The priests said that Kwame would reappear three or four days later as he was in the company of some dwarfs "who found him quite serviceable".

Four days later, just as everyone was giving up hope,



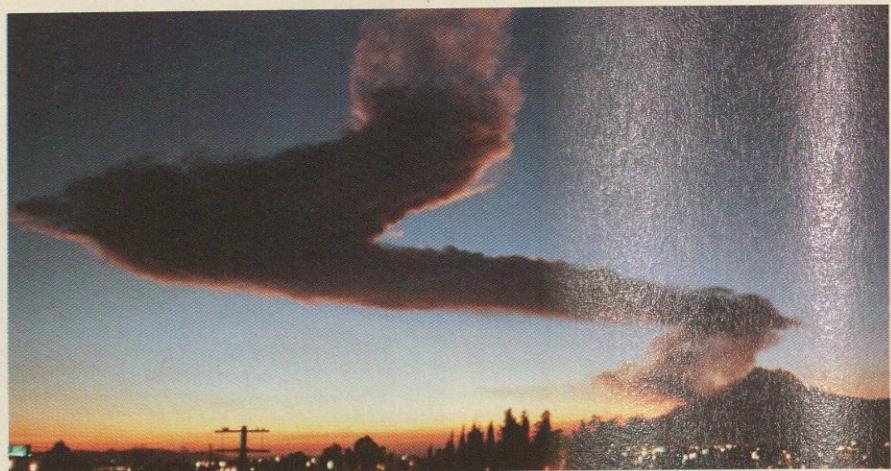
FABRIC

## struck by lightning discovery

**S**moke drifting downwind from massive fires in Mexico last spring caused strange changes in lightning activity over the central United States from April into early June. "It's a total surprise," said atmospheric scientist Walter Lyons. "It means something as innocuous as smoke can affect the fundamental behaviour of thunderstorms, over a very large area for a very long time." Usually, about 90 per cent of the cloud-to-ground lightning current delivers a negative charge. Last spring, however, 60 to 70 per cent of the strokes were positively charged and thus more dangerous.

"Positive strokes have a characteristic called continuing current; it can have hundreds of amps flowing for several milliseconds. That tends to increase the chance of starting fires or causing other electrical damage," said electrical engineer John Cramer, one of the five co-authors of a report in *Science*. Positive lightning flashes were hardly even known until the early 1980s, when a nationwide monitoring network came on line in the USA – so they are, in a sense, a recently discovered phenomenon that is not understood.

The altered lightning was most prevalent in the south-central United States, especially Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Nebraska, where most of the smoke was. During the two-



KEITH JACKSON

SMOKE SIGNAL: Smoke plumes stream from the active volcano Popocatépetl, south-east of Mexico City.

month period, the researchers counted nearly half a million flashes in the southern plains that exhibited positive cloud-to-ground flashes – about triple the normal amount – although it was not known if there was more damage than usual attributable to change lightning polarity.

The fires in Mexico, plus some in central America, were linked to drought brought on by the severe El Niño event that continued for most of last year. As Walter Lyons said: "We have to go back to the drawing board and find out exactly what it is in smoke that did this." *Newsday*, 2 Oct 1998.

## underwater finds

**A FIEGLAR OBJECT** sits on the bottom of the old ship-turning basin just inside the lock that separates the Chicago River from Lake Michigan. It's a sort of oak sausage 31ft (9.4m) long, 10ft (3m) in diameter, pointed at its ends, with a steel pipe running from end to end and an 18in (46cm) hatch to crawl inside. It was first noticed by recreational divers in the early 1990s. According to the *Ghana Mirror* (5 Dec 1998): "Master Kwame's return from the land of the dwarfs on Friday, November 20, was marked by traditional rites presided over by Barima Asumadu Sakyi II, Omanhene of the Kumawu Traditional Area".

**TALES OF RINGS** returned to rightful fingers after being lost for many years are legion and there is a bulging file on the subject in Fortean Towers. However, here's one with a very curious twist.

Whatever it is, and however long it has been there, it is now in the way of a project to wall off the turning basin from the Chicago River and connect it directly to the lake, which will allow the basin to be transformed into a marina. Realising that construction barges could destroy the object, marine engineers told private archaeological divers that they should move it if they wanted it preserved; but it's difficult to drum up public support for the project without knowing what on earth the thing is.

A wooden submarine has been ruled out. Theories include a vessel for plying nearby tunnels dug during the 19th century to supply drinking water to Chicago – one old tunnel, which collapsed in 1997 when the water was drained from it, has the same diameter as the object. Or perhaps it is a giant "cask" buoy or a target for pilots training at Navy Pier during World War II. Another suggestion is a float for a massive anti-submarine net like the kind strung across American seaports during the war; but then, no such nets were used anywhere near Chicago.

Many people thought it was a paravane, a device used by the US Navy to round up floating mines. However, the Navy determined that it wasn't a paravane, or indeed anything ever floated, sunk, or pulled by the Navy. "We know not what or whose it is," was the Biblical pronouncement by the Naval Historical Center on 16 December.

On 1 May, weather permitting, a

volunteer fleet will tow the object underwater out into Lake Michigan and sink it in some secluded nook away from shipping, where it will be marked with a buoy as an attraction for diving enthusiasts. Perhaps one day someone will identify it. *Chicago Tribune*, 25 Jan 1999.

**PRE-MILLENNIAL TENSION**

8 ISSUES AND COUNTING...

### GETTING MORE LIKE ARFUR

We're delighted to see that like PMT, Arthur C Clarke is bemoaning the year 2000 celebration, arguing that we shouldn't celebrate the new millennium until 2001. As Clarke says: "Though some people have great difficulty in grasping this, there's a very simple analogy which should appeal to

everyone. If the scale on your grocer's weighing machine began at 1 instead of 0, would you be happy when he claimed he'd sold you 10 kg of tea?" *Nando Media*, 7 Jan 1999.

Clarke's by no means the first to make such statements: "The present century will not terminate till 1 January 1801," said *The Times* on 26 Dec 1799. "We shall not pursue this matter further... It is a silly childish discussion and only exposes the want of brains of those who maintain a contrary opinion to that we have stated."

### THE RACE TO GET THERE FIRST

It seems that living anywhere 10 or 12 hours ahead of GMT – Australia, New Zealand, or the South Sea islands – is to be a mixed blessing come 1 January. Despite all the competition between the various islands as to who will be first to see the first sunrise of the millennium, tiny Pitt Island is getting it at 0359 hours, according to the *Royal Observatory Astronomical Almanac (1994 edition)*. Back in January 1995, however, the Republic of Kiribati announced that it was putting all islands in its jurisdiction on the same day of the week – this wasn't the case before, as the International Date Line cuts through this jurisdiction. A pretty handy idea for dealing with day-to-day business, but this 'bulges' out the Date Line by 1,000 miles (1,600 km), bringing Caroline Island over the line.

The Millennium Adventure company in New Zealand are non-plussed, stating that "the arbitrary and unilateral moving of time zones or the international Date Line does not give rise to any level of credibility in the international navigation community... any claim on the first millennium sunrise from a place geographically quite removed from the traditional dateline lacks sensibility, as any country in the world could do the same." *Independent*, 28 Nov 1997.

So the folks out east may be getting an earlier millennium – just as they seem to get every day first – but they will also encounter any Y2K problems before we do. Now there's a certain school of thought which claims that this will enable programmers in Europe or the Americas, or anywhere far away from the Date Line, to phone up or email their friends in Oceania to see what glitches can be fixed inside the 12-plus hour period. This is assuming, of course, that email and phone systems will still be working. If they are working, it should at least be interesting to see just how much can be done... if anything...

### THIS IS THE FUTURE

With the likes of British Airways and China packing their airline execs into planes for nail-biting new year celebrations, the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) had the novel idea of putting its computer systems a year forward for an entire week in both December 1998 and January 1999. The systems rolled over into 2000 "without a glitch". Air travellers were not informed of this, and as spokesperson Michael Twohig says, commuters have "probably already flown in the year 2000". Glad I stayed on the ground that month. *Irish Times*, 25 Feb 1999.

**Snazzy hyper-productive fortean Dave (daev) Walsh leads a daily Bloomsian existence whilst circumnavigating the streets of Dublin.** daev@blather.net <http://www.blather.net>





## strange deaths

**A MAN OF 39** died from eating and choking on his own flesh. A maid at the McLaren Hotel on Main Street, Winnipeg, found him dead in his room last September. He had severe calluses on his feet and apparently tried to cure the condition by biting off some of the dead skin. *Canadian Press*, 23 Sept 1998.

**BARBARA ROCK**, 54, headteacher of Highgate Pre-preparatory School in London, was standing on a window ledge trying to get rid of a cobweb in her holiday home in Suffolk when her husband came in and she lost her balance and fell to the ground. She was treated in Colchester hospital for injuries to her

pelvis and lower back and given crutches to walk on. Back in London a week later, she was doing step exercises on a box as therapy for her injuries when she fell out of the first floor window. She suffered serious head injuries and died in hospital six days later. *Camden New Journal*, 3 Dec 1998.

**BETTY STOBBS**, 67, put a bale of hay on her quad bike and went out to feed sheep at her family farm in Stanhope, Weardale, County Durham, on 26 January. As about 40 sheep rushed towards her and began jumping up on the bike to reach the hay, she was pushed into the disused Ashes Quarry, 100ft (30m) deep, and died as the all-

terrain machine rolled down on top of her. Her sheepdog, which had been riding on the back of the bike, survived the fall and was found lying beside the body. Alan Renfry, 48, saw the accident from his home and is convinced that the sheep were responsible for Mrs Stobbs' death. The headline in *The Sun* was, "Silenced By The Lambs". *Eve. Standard*, 27 Jan; *D. Telegraph*, *Sun*, *Scotsman*, *Gloucester Citizen*, 28 Jan 1999.

**HERNAN HERRERA**, 36, survived a crash into a tree in Miami Beach, Florida, on 17 January, but died when he got out of his car and was hit by a utility pole. Police think that he was warning other drivers of the downed electrical wires when another car hit the dangling lines, causing the pole to snap. *[AP]* 19 Jan 1999.

HUNT EMERSON

## MYTH CONCEPTIONS

HUNT EMERSON &amp; MAT COWARD

### 10 MELTING GLASS

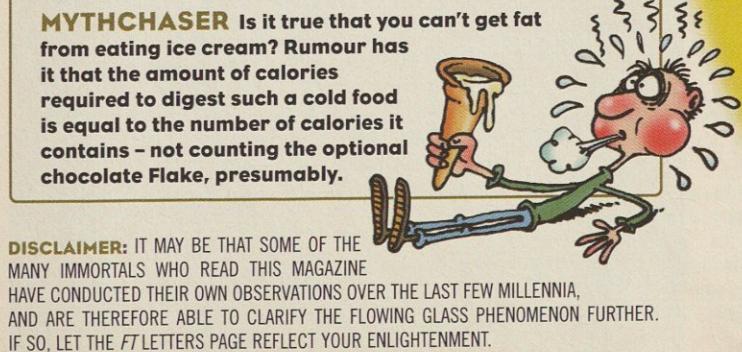
#### THE BACKGROUND

Medieval stained glass windows are thicker at the bottom than at the top, and the reason's obvious when you think about it. Glass isn't a solid, though it behaves like one, but an extremely viscous liquid. Therefore, over centuries, it flows downwards, away from heaven and towards hell. Must be true, this – it's in all the encyclopedias.

#### THE TRUTH

Experimentation is the bane of myth-makers. Last year, Edgar Zanotto (or Edgar Dutra Zanotto) of the Federal

SOURCES: The AJP story was picked up by *New Scientist* 16 May; *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 July; *Scientific American*, Aug 1998.



**DISCLAIMER:** IT MAY BE THAT SOME OF THE MANY IMMORTALS WHO READ THIS MAGAZINE HAVE CONDUCTED THEIR OWN OBSERVATIONS OVER THE LAST FEW MILLENNIA, AND ARE THEREFORE ABLE TO CLARIFY THE FLOWING GLASS PHENOMENON FURTHER. IF SO, LET THE FT LETTERS PAGE REFLECT YOUR ENLIGHTENMENT.

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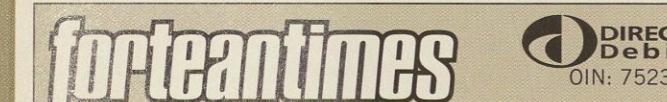
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# FREEDOM OF DISINFORMATION

THE US GOVERNMENT'S COLLUSION IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND IN DEALS WITH ALIENS ARE TWO MAJOR STRANDS OF MODERN CONSPIRACY THEORY. WHILE MJ-12 – THE SEMI-SECRET BODY ALLEGEDLY OVERSEEING THE ALIEN 'PROBLEM' – AND AREA 51 – THE SUPPOSED ALIEN HQ ON EARTH – ARE NOW WELL KNOWN, FEW PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THEIR ORIGINS IN THE LATE 1980s. VETERAN UFOLOCIST **DON ECKER**, WHO HAD A RINGSIDE SEAT AT THE BIRTH OF THIS MURKY MYTHOLOGY, CONCLUDES HIS ACCOUNT.

The close of 1988 saw American ufology in chaos over the claims and counter-claims about MJ-12. The airing, in October 1988, of the two-hour TV special *UFO Coverup - Live* only fanned the flames higher. In it, William Moore and Jaime Shandera – who had both gained fame for their investigations of the MJ-12 affair – introduced two men as American intelligence agents. Disguised electronically and given the codenames of 'Falcon' and 'Condor', the men stated as fact that the American Government was playing host to alien visitors. Memorably, 'Falcon' claimed the "grey aliens" liked strawberry ice cream.

Within days of this broadcast William Cooper sent me his critique of it for publication on the ParaNet bulletin board system (BBS)<sup>2</sup>. He claimed that *UFO Coverup - Live*, in tandem with the MJ-12 documents, was part of an elaborate disinformation scheme designed to lead UFO researchers away from the 'real' situation.

William Cooper declared that he could confirm "150 per cent" of the 'Lear Hypothesis'; a paper by John Lear containing allegations of the US Government's alliance with ETs who, in exchange for advanced alien technology, were 'allowed' to abduct unwilling human subjects for experimentation and the harvesting of biological material.

The confusing war of fantastic, paranoid and often contradictory claims between Lear and Cooper proved too much for ParaNet's founder Jim Speiser. He ejected them from the ParaNet membership on 26 October 1988, explaining his reasons in a four-page document.<sup>3</sup>

## THE MEN STATED AS FACT THAT THE US WAS HOST TO ALIEN VISITORS

Speiser also mentioned he had been contacted by a 24-year-old ParaNet user named Jeff Felix whom he agreed to meet in a restaurant in Tempe, Arizona. Felix claimed to work as a cryptology technician for the National Security Agency (NSA) who, while "fooling around" on the NSA computer, had stumbled across files on secret projects called 'Majestic' and 'Aquarius'. After consulting contacts who had a genuine intelligence background, Speiser put some testing questions to Felix at a second meeting several days later. Felix failed this simple test but referred to something he called "Project X-calibur".

When Speiser mentioned this to Cooper, he claimed to have heard of it but knew nothing more. Later that day, Cooper called Speiser back and, to Speiser's surprise, proceeded to tell him that 'Project Excalibur' was real and concerned an MJ-12 project to obtain technology from the aliens. Speiser later said he began to think that Cooper and Felix "were scamming me behind my back". ParaNet, he said, was becoming "a home for unwed paranoids."

That same month (October 1988) Lear sent Cooper copies of all his research into UFOs<sup>4</sup>, including communications from 'Val Valerian' (aka John Grace, an airforce NCO on active duty who had a keen

DOMINO EFFECT: Cooper accused the driver.

interest in UFOs) and the *Dallas Revisited* videotape made by Lars Hansson exploring the theory that John F Kennedy had been fatally shot by his driver. Hansson had sent it to Lear in the hope that Lear might help finance his JFK research, asking Lear not to pass it on to anyone. The fact that Lear passed it on to Cooper had catastrophic consequences.

BACKGROUND UFOS: MATT PATTISON; IMAGE OPPOSITE PAGE: GARI, CORBIS



In April 1989, KLAS TV journalist George Knapp presented a highly successful multi-part series on UFOs. In one segment, Knapp interviewed a man (electronically disguised) identified as 'Dennis' who claimed to have worked at a super-secret site in Nevada known as 'Area 51' and at an even more secret site called 'S-4'. His fantastic claim was he had worked on "real flying saucers". At this time, no-one except Knapp and Area 51 security knew who 'Dennis' was.

**K**napp invited John Lear several times to his weekly local TV show, called *On The Record*: on the first occasion, Lear showed Knapp the *Dallas Revisited* tape; on the second visit Lear brought along Bill Cooper. On air, Knapp discussed the 'JFK tape' with Lear and then asked Cooper if he knew anything about it. Cooper replied that not only did he know of it, but had first read about it in secret Naval files seen while he was attached to a US Navy 'Briefing Team' in Hawaii in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

Lear and Cooper also appeared on a radio programme broadcast from Las Vegas and heard all over the western United States, hosted by Billy Goodman on KVNG radio. In May of 1989, Lear and Cooper were asked to appear on a tabloid television programme, *PM Magazine*. Later – as I detailed in an exposé for *UFO Magazine*<sup>5</sup> – Lear heard Cooper telling the interviewer that while he was on the Naval briefing team in Hawaii, he saw secret files containing documents designated 'O H Krill'.

I knew these documents; John Lear sent me copies of the 'Krill papers' in early 1988. I knew that they were written by the USAF NCO John Grace using the pseudonym 'Val Valarian'. The name 'Krill' was an inside joke, referring to a case in the late 1950s in which Navy investigators interviewed a woman who claimed to channel an alien named 'Cyril'. Lear and Grace made up the initials 'O H' out of thin air. Grace did not want his actual name on these papers because he was still in the Air Force. So the

'O H Krill papers' were just over a year old at the time of this television programme, yet here was Cooper claiming to have seen them in 1972 or 1973.

Lear said: "When I heard Bill tell the interviewer he saw the Krill papers while he was in the Navy, I motioned him over and asked him, 'What in the hell are you doing?' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said 'Bill, John Grace and I did the Krill papers. We named them after a 1950s case' [...] Well, Cooper insisted he saw them in the Navy. That is when I really began to wonder about Cooper."<sup>4</sup>

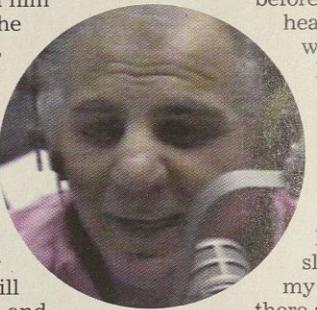
By June of 1989 Lear's paper on the "evil grey aliens," Bill Moore's MJ-12 research and Cooper's twist and spin on both subjects, were causing shockwaves throughout American ufology, as exemplified by the controversial 1989 symposium in Las Vegas organised by MUFON (Mutual UFO Network). During that year, John Lear became MUFON's director for Nevada and had invited Bill Cooper, Bill English and me to speak about our own research. At the very last moment (Saturday, 1 July), Walt Andrus – the International Director of MUFON – objected to the content of the papers by Lear, Cooper and English and cancelled their presentation, scheduled for Sunday.

The MUFON membership reacted with open revolt. Lear threatened to take his speakers down the street to another location and most of the conference would have followed him had it not been for an even more outrageous event. William Moore's talk ran for over two hours in length and had the audience calling for his blood. He admitted that he had worked hand-in-fist with military intelligence during the 1980s in an attempt to "get on the inside" of the military's knowledge on UFOs. During his speech, he admitted participating in the 'disinforming' of Paul Bennewitz, a civilian UFO investigator who had to be hospitalised for severe mental

problems. When Moore's talk was complete, he refused questions and rushed from the room leaving the proceedings in turmoil.

Lear seemed severely stressed and uncommunicative. Later he said: "Bill Cooper came to my house on Friday before the talk and was drinking heavily. He demanded to know who I was working for. He said he was afraid that either I or someone else

RADIO HOST: Billy Goodman.



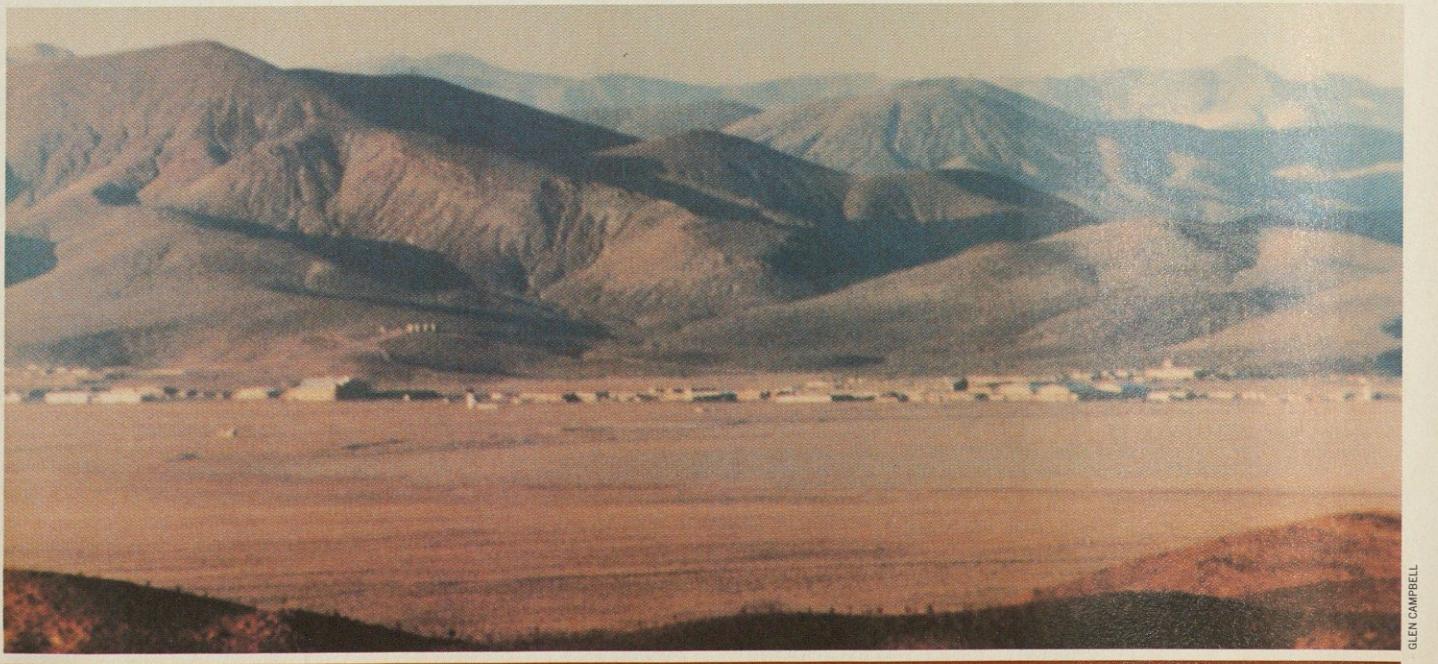
DON ECKER

was setting him up. The more he drank the louder he became and started slamming his hand down on my desk. His girlfriend was there and I thought she might try to temper him but did nothing. He then told me that anyone who tried to cross him would regret it. I moved to the other side of my desk, not sure what he might do. Finally his girlfriend led him out."

**T**hat Sunday (2 July 1989) the 'alternative' MUFON event began. Lear spoke first and then Cooper. By this time, Cooper had refined his material and for the most part stunned his audience by claiming the

US government had recovered dozens of UFO crashes and alien pilots. The aliens were abducting people and killing them, he said, and the US had a 'secret' space programme jointly with the Russians and the aliens with bases on Mars and the Moon. Cooper even claimed there were areas on the Moon where there was free-standing water and vegetation. "Man can walk on the Moon with just an airpack," Cooper confidently told the audience. Finally, he blurted out that President Kennedy was murdered by his secret service driver as part of a huge conspiracy plot and that he read about it in secret Navy documents.

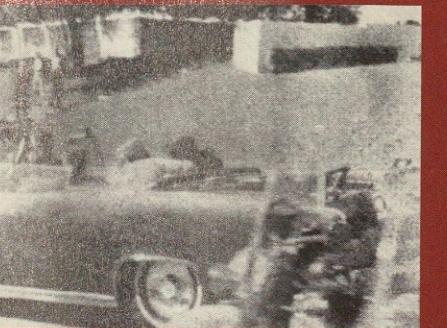
By November 1989, Cooper was a regular on the *Billy Goodman Happening* and had screened the *Dallas Revisited* tape to about 1,000 people at Hollywood High School. Around the same time, George Knapp did another popular series on UFOs for KLAS TV during which 'Dennis' was publicly



DREAMLAND: Located deep in the Nevada desert, does the once secret Area 51 really contain the debris of alien craft – and bodies – as has been claimed by many?

# WELL, DID THE DRIVER DO IT?

MARK PILKINGTON REVIEWS THE REASONS WHY THE ZAPRUDER FRAMES DON'T SUPPORT THE 'DRIVER' THEORY.



CORBIS

**C**onspiracist extraordinaire Bill Cooper claims that, while in the US Navy, he saw documents referring to film of the JFK assassination withheld from the public. This footage, he said, clearly showed Kennedy's limo driver William Greer turn around and shoot JFK from the front. When researcher Lars Hansson produced a video thesis, called *Dallas Revisited*, which appeared to show the same event, Cooper began to screen

it at his own lectures in the late 1980s.

Before long, however, Hansson was shown a significantly clearer version of the same footage, taken from the unedited Zapruder film of the assassination. As Hansson states in a 1991 affidavit: "Greer's hands never left the steering wheel, even though he did look back twice and stepped on the brakes – clear indications, as far as I am concerned, that Greer was probably never in on the plot."

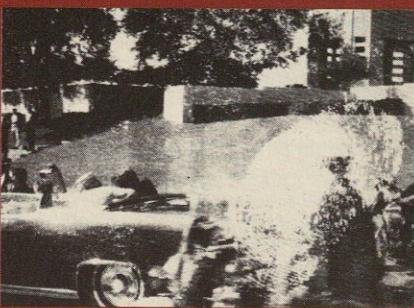
What Hansson originally took to be a muzzle flash from a shot, he later decided after seeing the clearer footage, was in fact a reflection off the head of a security agent in the front passenger seat.

*FT* saw a very blurry copy of the film sequence in question (thanks to reader Mike Walker). Kennedy is seen slumping forwards and clutching his neck after the initial shots are fired. At this point the driver clearly turns around, following which JFK recoils backwards, possibly after being shot from in front. However, due to the poor quality of the footage, it's impossible to say if Greer's hands

were on the wheel, let alone pointing a gun at the stricken president. Perhaps Greer hears the president in trouble and turns around to see what's going on? Greer died in 1974, so we will probably never know with certainty.

Hansson's affidavit, detailing his troubled involvement with Bill Cooper and John Lear, is available at:

<http://www.ufomind.com/area51/people/lear/hansson.html>  
<http://www.ufomind.com/area51/people/lear/hansson.html>



CORBIS

unmasked as the enigmatic Bob Lazar.<sup>6</sup> Lazar claimed to be a physicist who had worked on recovered alien spacecraft at the infamous Area 51 and S-4 sites. Knapp also interviewed John Lear, Whitley Strieber, Stanton Friedman and, briefly, Bill Cooper. Billy Goodman's show fought back with more frequent invitations to Lazar and his 'good friend' Gene Huff. With call-ins by Bill Cooper, and Cooper's unqualified endorsement of Lazar's story, the *Happening* gained a substantial audience.

Cooper hired an agency to book speaking engagements for him.<sup>4</sup> After hearing Cooper on the radio, Hollywood actor Michael Callan and his friend, Douglas Deane, felt they could 'package' him the Hollywood way. The three of them formed a partnership called Need To Know Productions. Soon, Cooper was one of the hottest tickets on the American UFO lecture scene.

Need To Know arranged an extravaganza at the Showboat Hotel<sup>7</sup> in Las Vegas to exploit the growing numbers of UFO conspiracy and paranoia buffs. Cooper was the main attraction, billed as "the most knowledgeable UFO researcher in the world today!" Once again his presentation included the *Dallas Revisited* tape. This time, Cooper replaced Lars Hansson's original narration with one of his own. He claimed that he had no idea where John Lear got the tape from<sup>8</sup>, as he had, he said, searched for it for 17 years.

During the early months of 1990, George Knapp and the KLAS TV management produced another UFO special to compete in the 'sweeps wars' (during which TV stations and networks attempt to outdo one another to garner ratings). Serious researchers – and some media channels – were now suspicious about Cooper's claims, especially concerning the Kennedy assassination tape. Even Lear talked openly about how Cooper claimed to have 'read' the 'Krill paper' years before Lear and Grace invented them.

A rival TV station hired private investigators to follow Knapp and Lazar around. When news leaked out that Lazar was followed to an illegal brothel, Knapp convinced Lazar to go public first. Lazar admitted that he knew the madam, saying she had hired him to set up a computer and software for her.

When Cooper learned of these matters, he tried to get in some 'pre-emptive strikes' – particular targets were people he thought had wronged him. He claimed (on his computer BBS) that Lazar had been arrested on

WHISTLEBLOWER: Area 51's Bob Lazar.



DON ECKER

drug charges, and that Lear and Knapp were involved. Knowing that one of Lazar's hobbies was his 'jet car'<sup>9</sup> and that Lazar often mentioned his 'speed shop', Cooper alleged that Lazar, Lear et al were using the shop as a front to manufacture and deal illegal drugs. This was a complete fabrication. This was the starting point of my own investigation of Cooper.<sup>4</sup>

Cooper hit out in all directions, accusing John Lear, Bill Moore, Stanton Friedman, me and anyone who disagreed with him of being disinformation agents and government assets. After my first exposé of Cooper's material, he kept leaving late night calls on my answering machine. Similarly, Douglas



DON ECKER

Deane and Michael Callan told me that Cooper had been harassing them, including making late night calls threatening their lives in a variety of fake voices in an attempt to extort master tapes from them and cut them out of profits.<sup>10</sup> Both men reported this to the police.<sup>11</sup>

Facing increasing criticism of his material as unreliable at best or deliberately twisted at worst, Cooper distanced himself from the UFO field. Time and again, the "driver shooting JFK" tape – one of the main planks in his argument – was shown to be wrong (see panel) and even fraudulent. (Cooper

had sent one version to Japan, where colour was added to it.) Lars Hansson – the man who originally produced *Dallas Revisited* – had repeatedly requested Cooper to cease showing the tape. Cooper refused, accusing Hansson of being a government agent.

Lars Hansson had spent a great deal of time explaining why the 'driver' theory was invalid. Significantly, Cooper had been calling for the driver, William Greer, to be brought before a court of law and charged with murder, seemingly oblivious to the fact that Greer died in the 1970s.

Cooper slandered many prominent JFK assassination researchers while pushing this theory and it was obvious he had very little investigative experience with the case. In a typically sudden and arbitrary switch of loyalties, he began to ally himself with the ultra right-wing militia movement, a position he maintains to this day. Now he claims that all UFO cases are actually part of a vast one-world conspiracy by a secret government that aims to enslave everyone through its tyranny.

Ufology was nearly destroyed by the disinformation games I've detailed here. Great harm was done; the real problems are still with us and there is no end in sight.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *UFO Coverup – Live*, hosted by Mike Farrell, October 1988.

2. At the time, I was the assistant system operator of ParaNet BBS in Boise, Idaho.

3. 'Lear And Cooper: An Explanation (But Not an Apology)', ParaNet (26 October 1988).

4. Lars Hansson interviewed John Lear (author has on tape) August 1990.

5. Don Ecker, 'The Whistleblowers' in *UFO Magazine* vol.5 no.4 and vol.5 no.5.

6. *The Best Evidence – Part 2* (November 1989), produced by George Knapp.

7. 'Bill Cooper Exposes TOP SECRETS', Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas (7 January 1990).

8. According to Lear, Cooper was aware of Lars Hansson and the details behind the *Dallas Revisited* tape.

9. Author's interview with Lazar, May, 1990 for *UFO Magazine*.

10. 'Cooper Exposes Cooper', audio tapes produced by Michael Callan and Douglas Deane.

11. Petition for Injunction Prohibiting Harassment. Filed by Douglas Deane against M William Cooper, Case No. 90-1580-HA.



# A BUG'S LIFE

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT FROM THE NEW EDITION OF *THE END OF TIME: FAITH AND FEAR IN THE SHADOW OF THE MILLENNIUM* (VINTAGE 1999), DAMIAN THOMPSON INVESTIGATES A NEW BREED OF MILLENNIALIST – THE COMPUTER PROGRAMMER.

THE GEEKS HAVE READ THE FUTURE IN MILLIONS OF LINES OF CODE

**A**midst the sagebrush and cacti of the Southern California desert, an apocalyptic believer called Scott Olmsted is preparing for the collapse of civilisation on the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999. He has put up a chain-link fence round his mobile home; he has laid in a year's supply of dehydrated food; he has bought his first gun to repel looters. "I'm still not 100 per cent sure that the world's coming to an end," he says. "But the idea that I might want to get out of town for a while is not such a long shot."

Olmsted's comments make him sound rather like one of the legendary terror-struck peasants of the year 1000, or perhaps a survivalist in the Randy Weaver mould, ear pressed to the ground to catch the rumblings of the federal Antichrist. In fact, he is a computer programmer who has been infected by a new strain of millenarianism. His prophecies have no supernatural component whatsoever. His imagined apocalypse is limited to the failure of computer technology – which is to say that it is not limited at all, but world-wide, unpredictable and devastating. As *Wired* magazine puts it, "veteran software programmers are blazing the millennial trail. The geeks have read the future, not in the *Book of Revelation*, but in a few million lines of computer code".

Welcome to Y2K: three little digits signifying a crisis of spectacular proportions caused by just two digits. A few years ago, only those initiated into the mysteries of software code knew or cared what this meant. By 1998, however, most people in the West knew about the problem and were beginning – just beginning – to feel seriously worried by it. Its official name, in Britain at least, is the Millennium Bug; but really it is more of a bomb, primed in the Stone Age of computer technology and programmed to explode at the millennium.

The story begins in the 1950s, when the programmers writing the first software had to decide how to set up computer clocks without absorbing too much precious memory. The solution seemed obvious: instead of spelling out a year with an extravagant four digits,

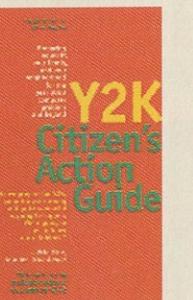
they would use two. The question of how 21st century dates would be written was left for posterity – not because the early programmers were incapable of looking so far ahead, but because they did not believe that this primitive expedient would still be necessary in the 1990s, the era of electric cars and Moon colonies.

They were wrong. The double-digit shorthand was wired into the heart of the world's software systems and forgotten about. It was not until about 1990 that a few programmers began to wonder what would happen at the turn of the millennium. At first, the question was asked almost in jest, as if to say "here's a funny little glitch that no-one has thought about". But then they tried to answer the question in earnest, and it rapidly ceased to be amusing.

The programmers realised that, as things stood, tens of millions of computers around the world would not know how to interpret the rollover from 99 to 00. They would either shut down or malfunction grotesquely, causing the instantaneous paralysis of traffic lights, lifts, nuclear power generators, hospital life-support systems and automatic teller machines.

Unless urgent action were taken, the consequences would easily surpass the fundamentalists' comic-strip images of the Rapture, in which planes hurtle into skyscrapers and motorways disappear beneath eight-lane pile-ups. The world would be thrown into a Thirties-style recession caused by the simultaneous unravelling of banking systems. Countries would be left defenceless by the failure of their weapons technology. And all this would start to happen at precisely the moment when the world passes into a new calendar era, making the great celebrations seem as brittle and pointless as a costume ball on the eve of the Great War.

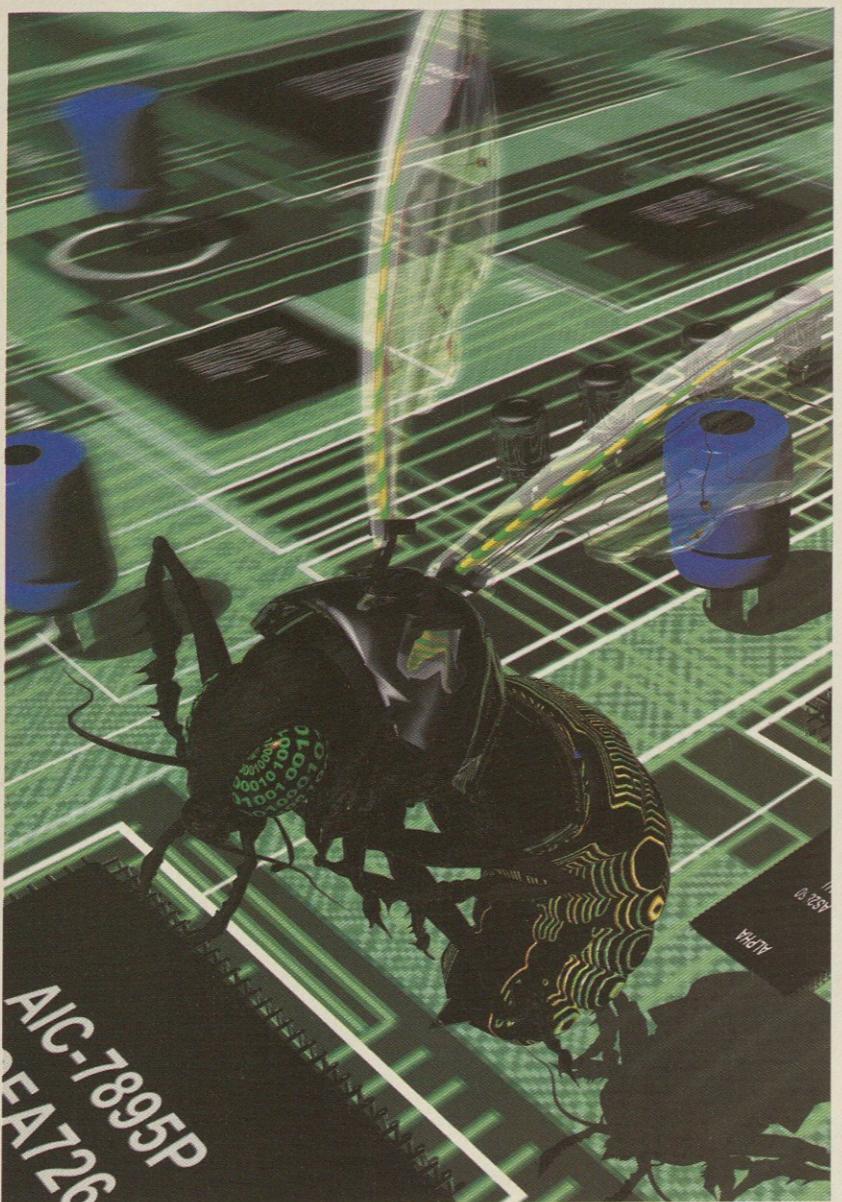
But forewarned is forearmed, surely. Not necessarily. In the last five years, governments, multinational companies and public utilities have spent billions of pounds on eliminating the Millennium Bug from their systems; emergency services and the military have drawn up elaborate contingency plans in case of system failure.



FOR COMPLETE PREPAREDNESS SEE UTNE READER'S Y2K GUIDE ON [HTTP://WWW.UTNE.COM/Y2K/INDEX.HTML](http://www.utne.com/y2k/index.html)



COMPUTER RENDERED IMAGES BY ALEXANDER TOMLINSON



## DON'T YOU REALISE THAT EVERYTHING STOPS IF THE POWER GRID GOES DOWN?

But it is all too late, says Scott Olmsted. Forget the worst-case scenario of everything crashing at once; it is the best-case scenario that keeps him awake at nights. He believes that the Millennium Bug cannot now be eliminated. There aren't enough computer programmers; too many systems are written in forgotten languages; too many date-sensitive microchips are embedded in everyday appliances which no-one will ever get round to checking; and, anyway, a company can spend millions of pounds cleaning up millions of lines of code only to be catapulted into bankruptcy because its suppliers and customers aren't Y2K compliant.

It is this last point that lies behind the more extreme reactions to Y2K: the belief that individuals are powerless to insure themselves against disaster because every service they use is wired into a hopelessly corrupted world-wide computer network. Take the case of Steve Watson, a 45-year-old who until recently was in charge of debugging 10 million lines of code for a major American telephone company. No sooner had he finished than one of his colleagues came up to him and sowed a terrible seed of doubt. "Don't you realise that everything stops if the power grid goes down?" he asked. Watson decided that his friend was right: despite lavish spending on Y2K precautions, the byzantine electricity grid was still riddled with the bug. Moreover, it was powered

by coal and fuel transported by microchip-operated railways.

Steve Watson now lives at a secret location in Oklahoma in a camouflaged bunker big enough for 40 people. Four M-16 assault rifles are on order. Photographs of him show a fat, pugnacious man gazing out at the world with the authentic expression of the survivalist: half paranoid, half smug. Should we take him any more seriously than all those *Soldier of Fortune* types holed up in the Idaho hills?

It is not easy to say. He may well have more in common with other survivalists than he would care to admit. Both Olmsted and Watson belong to a generation of software veterans whose manic creativity owes a lot to the paranoid anti-authoritarianism of the 1960s; arguably, they were infected by a secular millenarian virus long before the Y2K crisis. Nor should we assume that America's hi-tech frontier is religion-free territory, untouched by biblical notions of the End-time. Steve's wife Teresa buys into her husband's prophecies "because her Baptist faith tells her that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse could ride in with a global computer crash".

**O**n the other hand, everyone agrees that there is going to be some sort of Y2K fallout. So how can we separate probable consequences from scare stories? A sensible course of action might be to ignore the likes of Olmsted and Watson and consult level-headed programmers who can be trusted to assess the risk without succumbing to millennial panic. The only snag is that many computer experts seem to be panicking almost as much as the survivalists. Log on to the specialist Y2K websites and you will be confronted by a mass of information pointing towards a partial breakdown of society. Some of the language is nakedly apocalyptic: Gary North, founder of the largest Y2K website, prophesies "the greatest social upheaval since the Tower of Babel". But most of the 2,000 documents contributed to North's website anatomise the crisis in cool, technical language; that is what makes them so disturbing – and so difficult to assess.

These writings juxtapose common sense advice – check your fax machine and your microwave – with glimpses of a post-cataclysmic new order; and it is this juxtaposition which lends the Y2K prophecies their extraordinary force. If this is an apocalyptic fantasy, it requires far less of a leap of imagination than other examples of the genre. It does not ask believers to visualise the Beast of Revelation crawling down their high street, or to picture a mushroom cloud hovering over their local shopping mall. It hints at worldwide devastation scarcely less terrible than a world war; but it is a disaster set in train by the tiny, irritating dramas of

our daily lives: the cashpoint machine that swallows our card, the permanently engaged public utility, the PC that crashes because of a power cut – things in which everyone believes.

Not all software professionals, it should be said, subscribe to this vision. Many experts believe that America and Western Europe will experience only a mildly bumpy rollover, but that already shaky Far Eastern economies will be plunged further into recession. The truth is, of course, that no-one really knows. Thus far, the only firm conclusion we can draw from the Y2K crisis is that we know pathetically little about the technology which holds our society together.

In the last two decades, the tentacles of the computer system have lashed out across the world with such incredible speed that no-one has had time to work out the full implications of the

transformation. The prospect of perhaps a billion microchips failing at once has revealed more of the shape of the modern world than any amount of research or analysis; yet we still can't see enough of it to know how serious the disruption is going to be. Even Scott Olmsted will celebrate New Year's Eve 1999 at his home in the suburbs and will only move to his desert hideaway if the going gets rough.

The confusion surrounding Y2K may help explain why, even in 1999, so many Americans and Europeans are continuing to ignore it. Gary North blames "people with their heads in the sand", which makes him sound like an old-fashioned preacher shaking his head at the world's sinfulness. But there is more to this lack of response than a simple failure of nerve. For many people, hysterical over-reactions by "experts" have become one of the most tiresome features of life in the late 20th century. "Weren't we all supposed to have AIDS by now?", they ask.

They have a point. From the 1940s to the 1980s, the possibility of nuclear holocaust tormented the secular imagination with images of destruction worthy of the most powerful strains of Christian End-time belief. Recently, however, doomsday has been invoked more promiscuously; it has become attached to a succession of health and environmental crises which cannot bear its weight. Sometimes the crises were imaginary from the start: Elaine Showalter has identified the family resemblance between Ritual Satanic Abuse, Gulf War Syndrome, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Recovered Memory and Alien Abduction. The correspondence here is not with the grandest themes of the apocalyptic genre, but with their ugly, stunted offspring: conspiracy theories and moral panics. Yet all of these hysterical epidemics have been spread by self-styled experts, who have confronted governments and the public with "evidence" which no-one who lacks specialised knowledge can easily criticise.

Of course, not all the problems have been manufactured, merely blown out of proportion. Each case is different. What they have in common, though, is the enhanced role that society assigns to the specialist. If scientists, in particular, are not quite a secular priesthood, they increasingly behave like secular prophets. Their relationship to the great institutions of government and industry is not unlike that of Joachim, Savonarola and Nostradamus to their respective courts. Held in awe because of their arcane expertise, they flit self-importantly with the notion of themselves as saviours of an old civilization or heralds of a new one. But this prophetic function is also a source of weakness: it is subject to the sort of rapid disconfirmation which can make the prophets look ridiculous, and leads many people to ignore expert forecasts as a matter of principle – sometimes at their peril.

**S**this what has happened with Y2K? It is beginning to look like it. Not only are many people wary of doomsday predictions by experts who stand to gain financially from a full-scale scare; they are also determined not to be drawn into millennial panic. Y2K has been lumped together with other creepy manifestations of "Pre-Millennial Tension" and taken just about as seriously.

Professor Richard Landes of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University argues that if the computers had been programmed to fail on (say) 15 March 1999, the problem would have been tackled more enthusiastically. "We are paying the price for our deeply ingrained anti-supernatural bias. People are frankly embarrassed by the notion of reacting to something that's supposed to happen on the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999," he says. "Taking measures to avert disaster, heading for the hills, is what apocalyptic believers do, and they don't



STOCKPILE: People like Vikki Crosby are hoarding supplies.



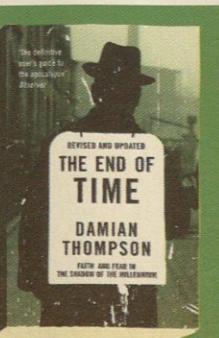
## THE GREATEST SOCIAL UPHEAVAL SINCE THE TOWER OF BABEL

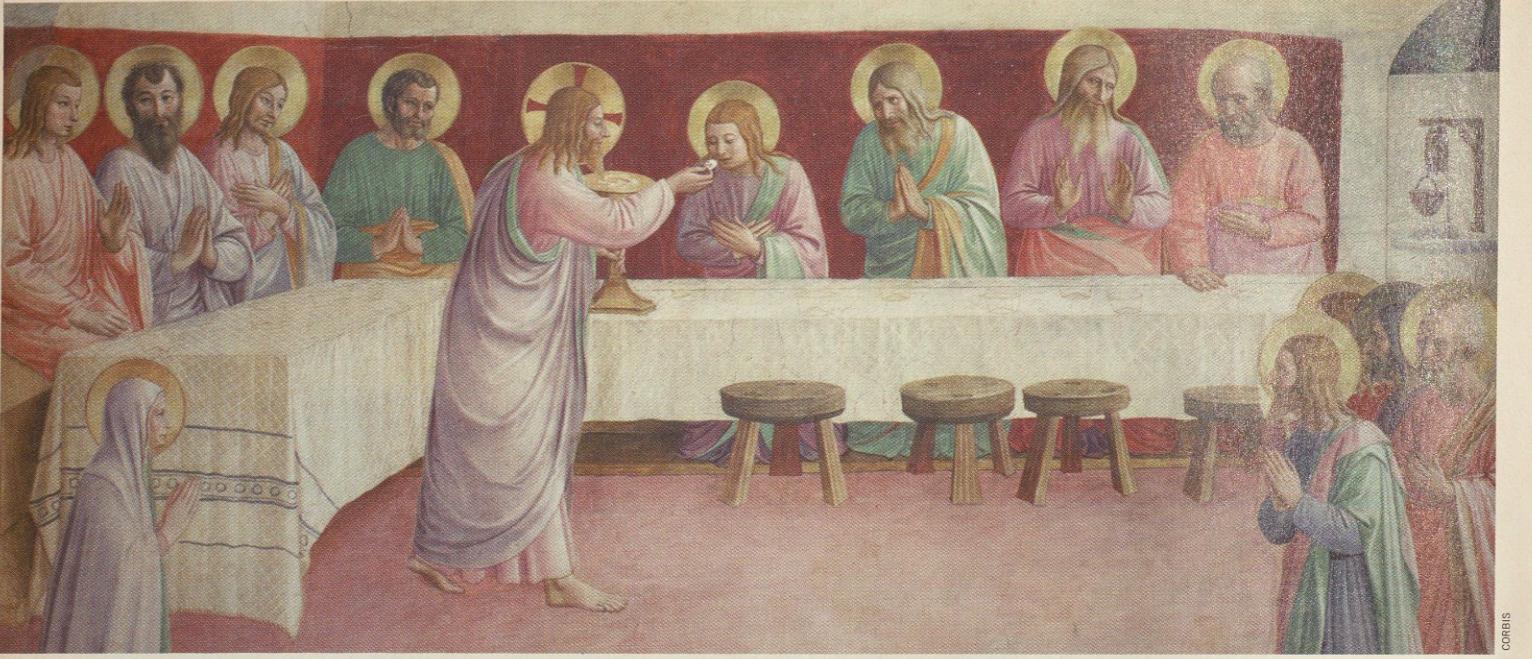
going to be on New Year's Eve?" are crowding in on people simultaneously. It is not just that the prospect of technical paralysis provides a spiky counterpoint to soaring themes of millennial optimism: it could ruin the Big Night itself. The Center for Millennial Studies is advising celebration organisers that they should be ready for some sort of technical breakdown at midnight – perhaps by building the possibility into the programme of events.

The irony of all this is so overwhelming that it scarcely needs to be pointed out. At the very moment that might so easily have symbolised the universal triumph of the microchip, large parts of the world could be plunged haphazardly into primal darkness. It is unlikely to happen quite like that, perhaps, but that is not the point: what matters is our inability to know in advance.

### READER OFFER

*Fortean Times* readers can purchase copies of the paperback edition of Damian Thompson's *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Vintage, 1999) for the special price of £6.50 inc p&p. To order simply call 01789 490215 or turn to the merchandise pages for an order form.





ANYONE WHO HAS LOOKED INTO FORTEAN PHENOMENA KNOWS THAT A REAL MYSTERY IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY ITS FRAUDULENT TWIN; FOR EXAMPLE, IS CROP CIRCLE-MAKING ART OR DECEPTION? ROB IRVING - WHO HAS MADE CIRCLES AND FELT THE ANGER OF THOSE WHO FEEL HIS 'ART' MOCKS THEIR BELIEFS - CLAIMS DECEPTION IS PART OF CREATION AND A NECESSARY PART OF BOTH SCIENCE AND ART.

Monsignor make any reference to his church's own improbable hoard of relics; its 15 'arms of St Andrew' or the 14 'foreskins of Jesus', for instance, are an open invitation for satire.

In Daniel Defoe's parody of dabollism, *History of the Devil* (which he didn't dare sign in his own name), not only are magicians, astrologers, witches and diviners offspring of the Father of Lies, but also the fools who believe them.

While little analysis of hoaxing exists – understandably, considering the breadth of the continuum – it is safe to say that the term is generally associated with deviant behaviour, undermining accepted standards. What constitutes 'truth' is relative to the consensus of what constitutes 'false'. The more dogmatic our beliefs, the more heresy there is to confront, and the all-too-human machinery of projection and denial produces scapegoats in abundance.

Those who make crop patterns, for instance, are enthusiastically demonised by those who believe the designs have an otherworldly origin. Cereology is unique amongst all modern 'paranormal' phenomena in the extent to which its creators openly participate in the wider social phenomenon their work has

This process of accommodation is a significant ingredient of many fortean phenomena and can lead to vast castles of the mind being built on the sandiest foundations. An example is the way the American astronomer Percival Lowell 'saw' canals on Mars. Once he had interpreted the changing colours of the Martian surface as changes in vegetation, it was "only rational"

to think that sophisticated life also existed there. It followed that it would require water, hence the canals; ergo, an advanced civilisation built them. What would Lowell have made of Cydonia and 'the Face'?

A similar approach leads to 'proof' of the divine origin of the Turin Shroud; what some analysts see as random specks

are clearly visible to others as traces of Roman coins.

The study of error provides fruitful insights into human behav-

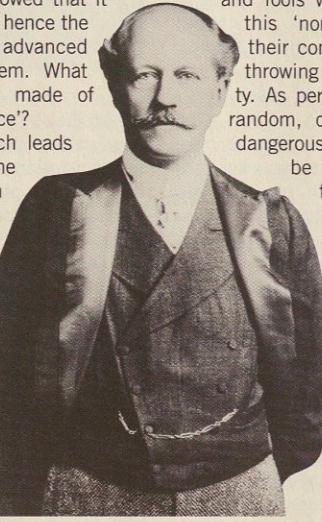
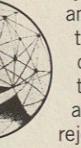
itarianism. It does not always follow that alternative belief equates to open-mindedness – consider the 17th century Puritans who escaped religious persecution in one country only to practice persecution in another. Charles Fort observed the same process in the way dogmatic scientists react to any challenge to their authority; he referred to the rejected data or ideas as 'the Damned'.

The classic archetype of jesters and fools were an antidote to this 'normalising' process; their comedic interventions throwing doubt upon certainty. As personifications of the random, of chaos, they are dangerous; their threat has to be neutralised. Thus, they wear funny hats, they are not 'us' – we laugh at their folly, not ours. Satirists, parodists and artists are feared for the opposite reason;

they mimic our prejudices, inviting us to recognise our own folly. Dickinson likens his work to Rorschach tests. The very ambiguity of the circles is intended to challenge preconceived ideas, just as the German Romantic poet and spiritualist Justinus Kerner used similar ink-blots to 'see' ghosts. Another circle-maker, Jim Schnabel, defined the general principle: "If there can be artifice on the way into the mind, there can be artifice on the way out."

Introduce doubt into a room full of certainty<sup>1</sup> and the implosion makes for exceptional theatre. At a gathering of crop circles enthusiasts, somewhere in London in 1995, the artist Rod Dickinson is explaining his motives for circle-making against howls of dissent. To the majority there, Dickinson and his cohorts represent an ultimate betrayal. These cereologists fiercely oppose any explanation for the patterns; their investigations are a mask disguising a tacit understanding among themselves that the 'higher' truth lies in not finding answers, for answers gut the wonder out of mystery. Their one, overriding certainty – as in Lowell's case – is in seeing in otherworldly artifice signs of superior intelligence – an intelligence that is surely beyond the likes of Dickinson, John Lundberg, Doug Bower and me, seated together in the midst of their rabble.

Dickinson likens his work to Rorschach tests. The very ambiguity of the circles is intended to challenge preconceived ideas, just as the German Romantic poet and spiritualist Justinus Kerner used similar ink-blots to 'see' ghosts. Another circle-maker, Jim Schnabel, defined the general principle: "If there can be artifice on the way into the mind, there can be artifice on the way out."



# ART & ARTIFICE

POPPERFOTO

**HOCUS POCUS:** (This page) The Christian Eucharist is often referred to by sceptics as the 'holiest of conjuring tricks'. Priests and shamans of all times and cultures have used simple tricks to enhance their message – yet, contradictorily, when their enemies use the same methods, they are condemned for being inspired by the Devil.

(Facing page) US astronomer Percival Lowell (1855–1916) imagined a Martian civilisation based upon Schiaparelli's sketches of 'canals' (middle and top). In *The Emperor's New Clothes* the courtiers continue to hold his non-existent train, even when the absurdity is pointed out to them. A bit like some croppies...

In *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light*, John Cornwell's meander through contemporary Catholic mysticism, he tells of encountering a group of tourists at the epicentre of Marian activity, Medjugorje. They were squabbling over a photograph of what looked like a pretty Italian model posing as the Virgin. "What's the problem?" asked Cornwell. "Some priest has been saying that he captured this in his camera. Why do people have to do this? It spoils the truth," replied one. "I believe it!" insists another. "You've got to have faith."

Hoaxing, in some guise or other, plays a part in most phenomena; it's not a new development, just that we understand slightly more than we used to. The word 'hoax' is thought to derive – via 'hocus pocus' – from the Latin *Hoc est corpus* ('this is my body') traditionally uttered by priests during Mass, itself an imitation of Christ's Last Supper, that holiest of conjuring tricks, the Eucharist.

Here, in a nutshell, we have the thorniest problem facing forteans – the indivisible, insoluble bond between reality and illusion, between those who believe mystery should be adored and those who would play with it... between art (divinely inspired) and artifice (man-made simulacra of the divine). An understanding of these relationships

is crucial to discovering the nature of true and false phenomena, especially when (as Fort put it) "they are indistinguishable at their merging points". In the triadic round of seer, seeing and the seen, the distinction between art and artifice is easily lost or obscured.

In his 1926 treatise on mysticism, the Catholic theologian Monsignor Albert Farges concluded that some miracles "are counterfeits due to an act of the Devil who, in all ages, has shown himself to be the ape of God." These are always betrayed by their inherent moral malice, he writes, as are false ecstasies and false miracles.

Hagiographies are full of sham stigmatics and visionaries, dubious wonder-workers and small-time prophets, but the grounds on which they are judged false are not always clear – for example, the 'pious fraud' who has sincere belief in something false. Nor, as far as I know, does the

spawned, demanding a seat at the table of those who detest them.

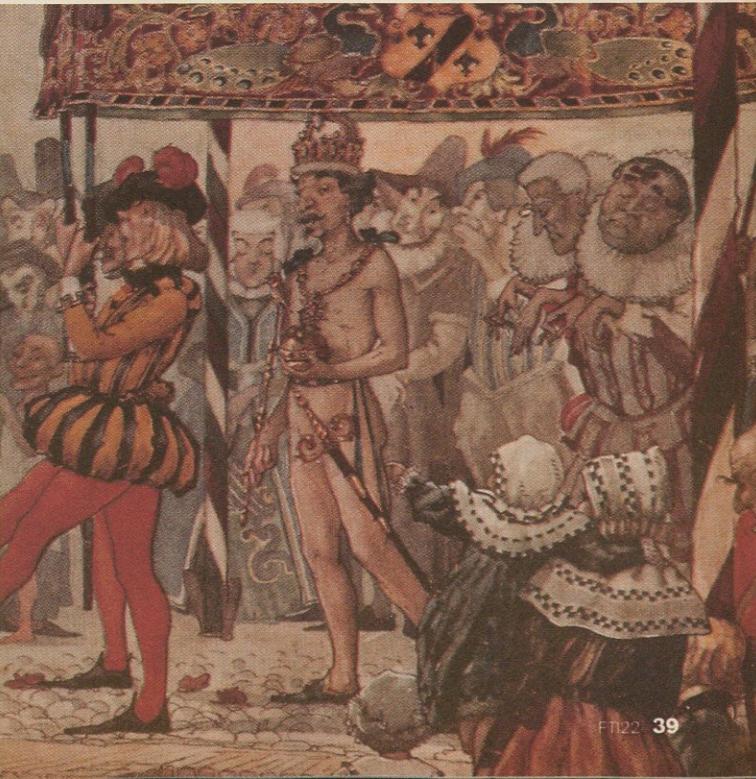
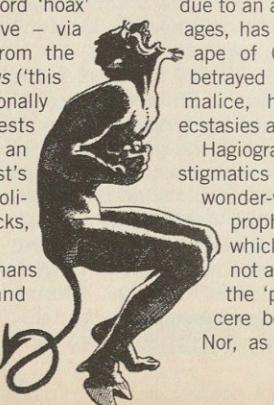
The Greek sage Apollonius of Tyana and a disciple, Damis, are discussing the nature of art. Damis defines it as imitation of art. Apollonius agrees, but asks about the forms we can see among the clouds – centaurs, wolves and horses, etc. Are they not also imitation? Doesn't this mean, asks the magus, that the act of imitation is an interactive process?

The world we experience is not an exact image of objective reality; it is a virtual reality, generated from sensory input filtered through theories, knowledge, emotion, associations and so on. This is not to say that nothing is real, just that we can never experience reality directly.

Our natural instinct to make sense of our perceptions – the desire for order – can be so strong that the obvious can be obscured and the mundane made mysterious, magnifying the merest conjecture into astounding fact.

During a spat with a leading ET proponent, I suggested that anomalous could usefully learn from the ideas of sociologist Leon Festinger. The way he swiftly dismissed as "discredited" a body of work he had plainly not read underlined my point. Festinger observed that, to varying degrees, we strive to preserve a sense of consistency in our beliefs by adapting new, potentially threatening information to suit ourselves. His theory of 'cognitive dissonance' is a subtle variation of the 'fight or flight' response; we will usually opt for the safety of familiarity rather than confront the danger of the new or the humiliation of being proved wrong.

This behaviour is most evident in groups, in which the status quo is maintained by the common intolerance of contrary opinion. The threat to group stability must be effectively separated and rejected. Festinger suspected that a very low tolerance of ambiguity in groups or individuals indicated a predisposition for author-





Naturally, any discussion of perceptual fallibility is the last thing the croppies, committed phenomenologists, want to hear. As so often happens, what could have been an interesting debate becomes a dialogue of the deaf. A woman behind us is shouting. She lives a short but discernible distance from her left brain, the gap apparently filled with guruspeak and a jumble of New Age parochia. To her, the truth is nigh but 'out there', obscured by a veil of appearance to all except an anointed élite who see things as others do not. Her pious smile – before Dickinson dared speak – is now its enantiodromic shadow of doubt as the synergy of 'hoax' and self-delusion dawns across the room. Imagine a Cathar revival with no-one laughing.

Of course, illusion is the artist's stock-in-trade. Worse for her, not only are we makers so evidently at odds with the communion she experiences in our work, we are actually co-dependent. Her yearnings for unearthly encounters has its sinister twin in our efforts to satisfy and even drive those aspirations. As some of this sinks in, happy-clappy turns angry-snappy: "You are not artists!" she is yelling to paroxysmal applause. "You are scum!" The role of 'hoaxer' itself creates an interesting disparity for the thick-skinned; as Freud noted, ignored human realities tend to return in bizarre and fanatical forms.

The applause his cue, enter Tom Fool, a world-renowned expert and speaker. He is blessed with knowledge of realities lesser mortals can only dream of: crystal cathedrals on the Moon, colourful encounters with unseen entities, vanished evidence and meetings with shadowy officials who would like it to stay that way – a right royal cavalcade of invisibilities. The woman's smile returns. Dickinson sits down in deference to a master.

Our willingness to imbue the inanimate with the essence of divinity has become a cliché of the New Age. In this quasi-religious-cum-pseudoscientific culture, all manner of objects, images, experiences and even 'hard' empirical data are touted as evidence of the incorporeal. It comprises many different pursuits, ostensibly independent but bound together by a shared obsession with 'the supernatural' and tempted by the same market forces.

This collective *psychomachia* (a struggle between spirit and flesh) generates enough artifice to rival Catholicism as a cult of icons and relics. For example, every year Dickinson's summer studio – the fields of Wiltshire – attracts like numbers of sensation-seekers as Medjugorje. In both places, each fresh apparition catalyses a profusion of folk mysticism, demonstrating that both are part of the same human condition.

While little conflict exists between science and traditional religion, purveyors of 'proof' of the existence of aliens, their craft, ghosts and myriad spiritual energies are another matter. Theirs is a culture lost in the uncharted territory of validation. Obvious problems arise in defining what is natural and what is not in an environment where no such distinction is made. Ironically, even the term 'supernatural' represents an ethnocentric, scientific view-point.

In this territory, common language, usually a guarantee of meaning, becomes a useful means of misinterpretation. Crucially, the

word 'genuine' implies a single and identifiable origin, but anything supernatural is, by definition, unverifiable. Testing for genuineness, as opposed to falsifying, is like using an oracle to determine truth. In our virtual reality, genuine is whatever we believe or agree it to be. Accordingly, 'fake' and 'hoaxed'<sup>2</sup> can be genuine too, as is easily demonstrated.

This mimicry of natural science is symptomatic of a culture trapped between New Age mysticism and the end-times of Enlightenment. To the pseudoscientist, conventional criteria are out of time and out of place; his is the realm of future-science. However, this dressing up in new skin for old ceremonies suggests a fear that by physically nailing the supernatural it will be appropriated by convention – its mystique laid bare and any chance of direct communion lost. In evolutionary terms it makes ideal camouflage for avoiding the selection process by which sci-

any definitive image of 'out there', all we have are our own constructions, driven by a yearning for new experience. To understand this is to appreciate the power of imagination.

In Europe, observation became the arbiter of truth and falsehood through devotional art. The Renaissance obsession with 'rational' perspective was as much a scientific act as it was artistic, reflecting an increasing recognition of the external world. It emerged, writes Umberto Eco, "from a universe of hallucination. A symbolic forest peopled with mysterious presences; things were seen as if in the continuous story of a divinity who spent his time reading and devising *Weekly Puzzle Magazine*." Like all illusion, art's mediation to the theatre of the inner eye is not an intellectual device. Evolution is not always progressive, but a mechanism for adapting to shifting environments. What was relevant to the old Dark

ROB IRVING

## IN OUR 'VIRTUAL REALITY', GENUINE IS WHATEVER WE BELIEVE IT TO BE

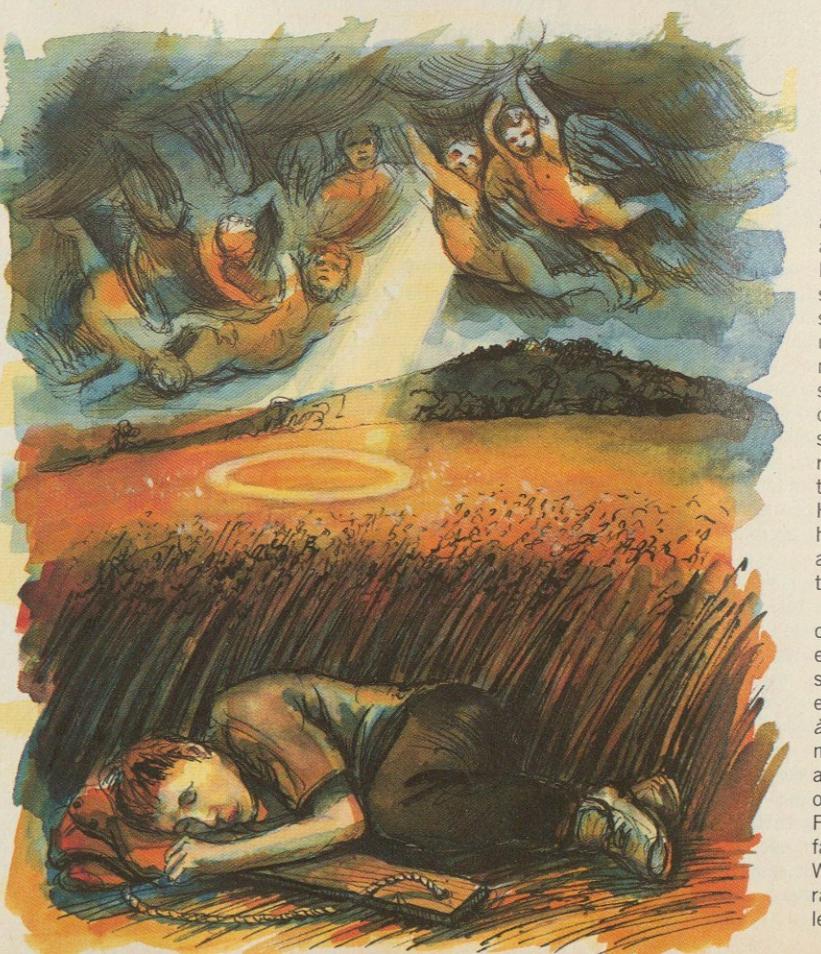
ence filters out 'bad' mutations. The surreal must be always just out of reach and continually reinvented to maintain its distance. For instance, in cereology the romantic notion of an artist asleep while the angels do his work is taken quite literally – the circle-maker as unwitting scribe is a convenient means for accepting the obvious evidence of human involvement without having to abandon the higher mystery. In the absence of

Age still holds to the New. Aesthetics and psychology are subtly intertwined. As with the ranting cereologist, in the psychology of mysticism a confusion exists between states of 'me' and 'not me'. Aesthetician Morse Peckham describes this mental separation from one's immediate environment as 'psychic insulation', a mild trance state. Art inspires precisely this kind of experience of discontinuity. Just as the artist tries to forget the work of earlier artists, the mystic distances himself from existing knowledge (all the easier if he's never known it).

Ignorant inquiry – the very basis of invention – is grounded in both art and science. "The creative person" writes Peckham, "is able to see similarities and relationships that are new and unique. But first they must be able to see dissimilarities where before only similarities were seen, and the absence of relationships where traditionally they are found. He sees that the emperor has no clothes. He sees absurdities in conventional wisdom."

Where the scientist is conditioned to recognise existing relationships, the seer seeks new ones. He enters into a kind of *folie à deux* with the object, making connections that are either invisible or overlooked by others. Formal logic often gives a false picture of anomaly. We are not rational, we rationalise, which can lead to conclusions just

MPL



**FAIRY GOOD:** (Left) Frances Griffiths and Elsie Wright could not have imagined the crisis their fake photos would provoke among the believers. (Below) Stendhal (1783-1842) so frequently swooned at the sight of great art that a syndrome was named after him.

**G**iven the relationship between art and perception, it is not surprising that it triggers 'paranormal' experience. Draw a circle around a stone and the stone becomes the incarnation of mystery; frame an image with belief and it defines the belief.

Thus there is no real difference between a classical painting of the dead Christ and modern-day videotape of a dead alien. When Anthony 'Doc' Shiels made his celebrated photographs of water monsters, he was doing what artists have always done... creating a magical link between an image and an idea, between artifice and art. By modelling the monster he hoped to conjure up a real encounter, just as Palaeolithic hunters might stab a cave-wall drawing of a bison to evoke success in the coming hunt. Viewed in this context, it is ultimately ridiculous to judge these creations in terms of 'genuine', 'fake' or 'hoaxed'.

As Fort observed, the bane of psychological research is that if such a phenomenon exists it must have its fraudulent twin. Naïve as they seem to us now, the Cottingley photographs of paper fairies and the ectoplasmic laundry of spirit mediums were enough to lure serious scientists into a world baffling to their familiar empiricism. Yet, these fairy-makers and ghost-makers were proto-surrealists, inspiring their successors. Today, image-manipulation is a viable and accepted means of making our secret visions visible.

William Boyd's biography of non-existent painter Nat Tate. Tate's statue was accepted on the strength of Boyd's own as editor of a respected art magazine; if he thought the work worthy, it must be.

Like all successful satire,

it reminded us of our own irrationality.

This attachment

– driven by the

same pseudo-

scientific

gusto as, say,

cereology

(which is also defined

by its pursuit of author-

ship) – denies new ideas

simply because they are new. It has no real value other than to give us some idea of consensus.

In her

excellent

analysis of how

society creates

its monsters, Marina

Warner concurs with

Festinger in suggesting that the function of a scapegoat is to allow a community to expel the profound terrors it experiences about its own behaviour. In the New Age confusion between image, experience and reality, the spectre of the hoaxter has returned as something of an urban myth, like the Hallowe'en sadist who puts razor blades in trick or treat candy. One ufologist, known for his zealotry, compares UFO and crop circle 'hoaxers' with those who throw acid on religious paintings. "You destroy what is beautiful," he told me, as if aping god – or, in this case, ET – is an iconoclastic act of debauchery. Even if this made sense, iconoclasm is aimed at the power of imagery and is therefore a perverse form of appreciation – hardly a sceptical act.

Likewise, the common charge that creating false phenomena "muddies the water of serious research" is an impressive euphemism for fear of

the same way as a theatrical environment shapes our perception of a performance. Outside the 'correct' context, our experiences are no longer governed by familiar or given conditions. The islanders' 'blindness' was a cognitive dissonance; the same conditions operate when an unidentified flying object becomes a bird, or a fire-breathing dragon, or an alien spacecraft.

These are often only achieved,

noted the philosopher Paul

Feyerabend, by irrational, counter-inductive and 'unscientific' methods. Whilst early modern science brought liberation and enlightenment, now he believes it inhibits freedom of thought: too many scientists today are devoid of ideas, full of fear, fixated by the status quo.

Paradoxically, just as we are beginning to realise the value of play in human development, the wider opportunities for it are diminishing.

Rather than seeing value in error, we emphasise its correction. To venture beyond accepted boundaries is to risk being labelled a fool. But in order to progress we need the constant stimulus of new ideas, even if this means we have to conjure them out of nothing. The artist fulfils this function, as do potty geniuses, pious imaginists and 'cranks'.

Dickinson and his fellow circle-makers follow an abundant tradition of artists who have specialised in actively stimulating visionary experience. The sculptor James Turrell is another; his 1996 exhibition at London's Institute of Contemporary Art, for instance, was designed to "induce extraordinary visions and sensations, evoking the UFO as both sensory experience and metaphor".

Their playful interest in 'the supernatural', like the subject itself, creates elaborate forms out of disconnected myths, from which new truths may emerge. It is a theatre of interactive creativity in which to escape convention.

Metaphor is perhaps the key: we don't necessarily have to believe in, or reject, the phenomena to gain from the vision. By presenting us with unexpected novelty which threatens, cajoles and ultimately ridicules blind belief and its mirrored twin, blind scepticism, we learn new ways to perceive it.

### NOTES

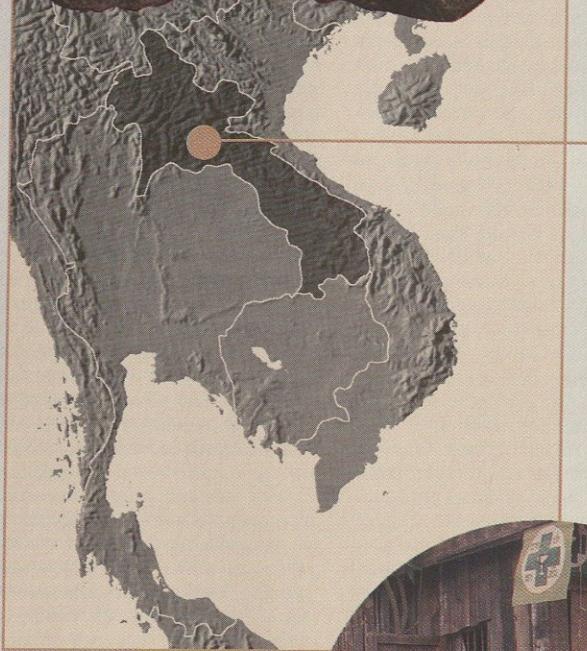
1. In behaviour therapy, a method of treating phobias by which the patient is exposed intensively to the object of fear.
2. In this context the word 'hoax' has become hopelessly emotive, useful only to those quick to attribute motive to action.

### FURTHER READING

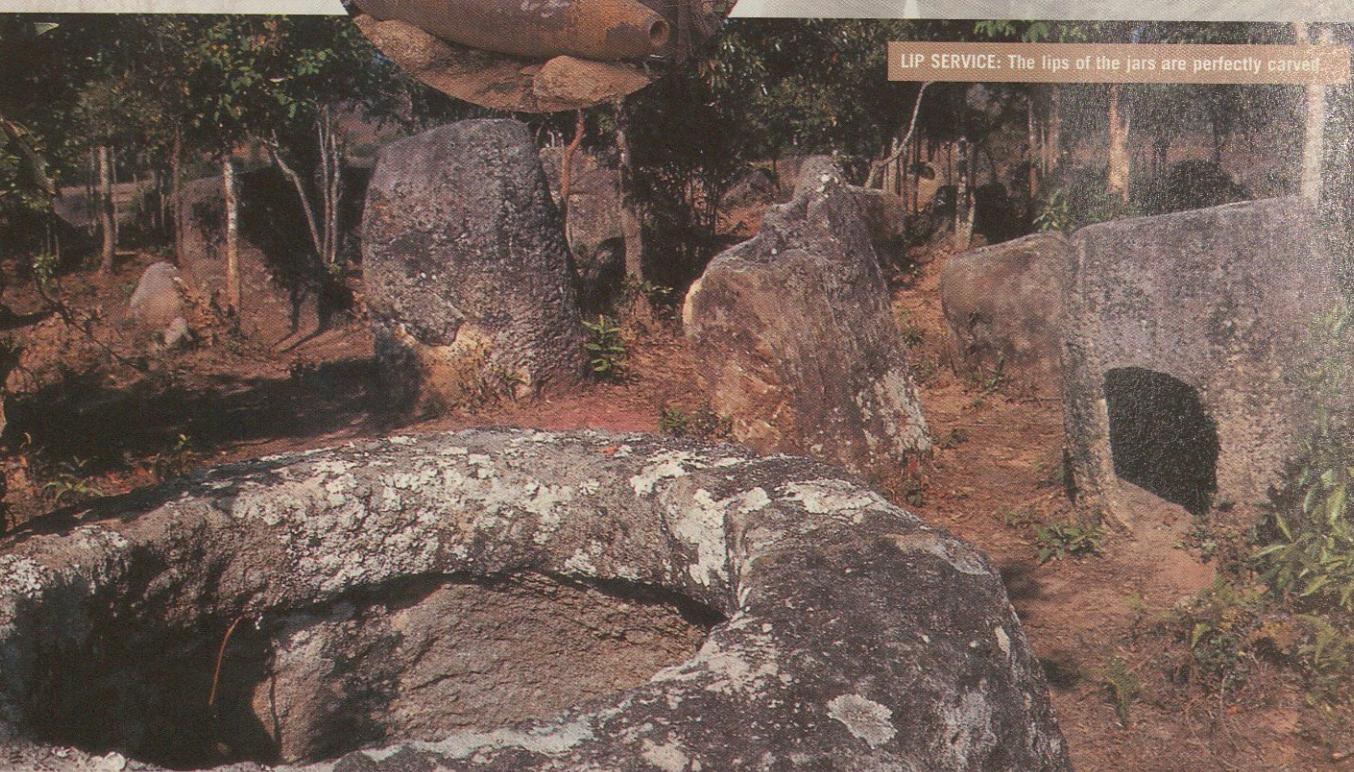
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Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford University Press, 1957)  
Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behaviour and the Arts* (Schocken, 1967)  
Marina Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* (Chatto & Windus/Random House, 1998)

## FRAME AN IMAGE WITH BELIEF AND IT DEFINES THE BELIEF

the same way as a theatrical environment shapes our perception of a performance. Outside the 'correct' context, our experiences are no longer governed by familiar or given conditions. The islanders' 'blindness' was a cognitive dissonance; the same conditions operate when an unidentified flying object becomes a bird, or a fire-breathing dragon, or an alien spacecraft.



**IN COUNTRY:** (top) A typical 'dancing figure', arms raised, carved on a jar lid. (right) Phonsavan, the local town, is still a graveyard of American cluster bombs from the war.



**LIP SERVICE:** The lips of the jars are perfectly carved.

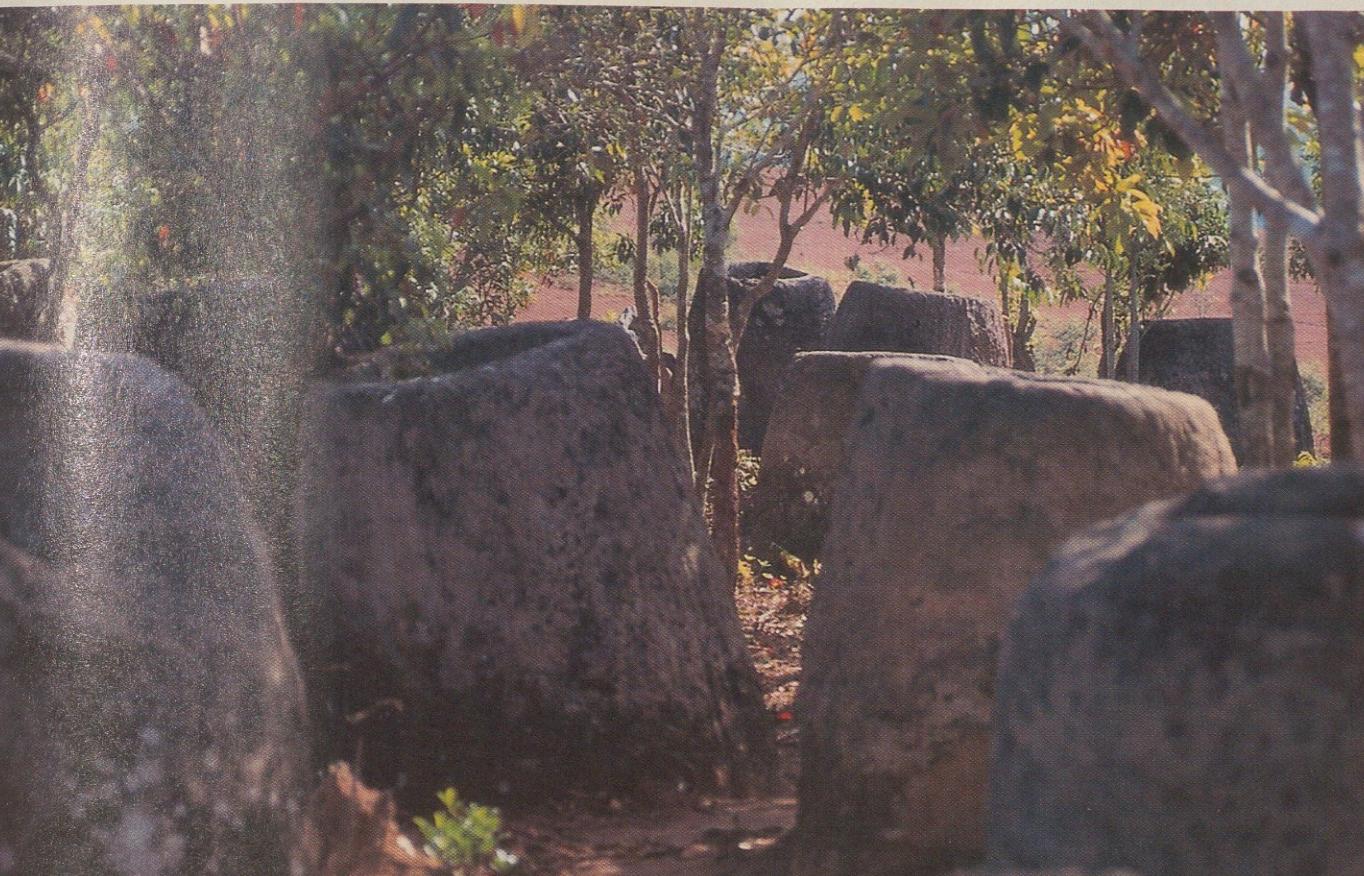
# THE PLAIN OF JARS

**MIKE JAY** REPORTS ON AN ENIGMATIC REGION OF EASTERN LAOS AND ITS HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS OF MYSTERIOUS ANCIENT STONE JARS.

**T**here can be few more prodigious anomalies, even among prehistoric Stone Age sites, than the Plain of Jars. In a remote, sparsely-populated area of eastern Laos, 30 sq miles (7.7sq km) of scrub-forested plateau are scattered with hundreds upon hundreds of massive stone jars, all laboriously hand-carved from solid rock and scattered seemingly at random across various uninhabited sites. As to who made them, or when, or how, or why, no-one seems to have the faintest idea.

There's little doubt that they're very old – pre-Buddhist, and thus effectively prehistoric. A 2000-year-old Chinese bamboo parchment attests their presence and, even at that date, their remote antiquity. Most estimates place them at around 3-4000 years old, and attribute them to a notional South-East Asian megalithic civilisation which can still be traced among animist groups in the island interiors of Indonesia and New Guinea, and may be related to that of Easter Island. But, among this vast and scattered trail, the jars are entirely unique.

Archaeology has, at present, little to add to the few facts which are immediately apparent. The jars are made of granite and sandstone which, typically,

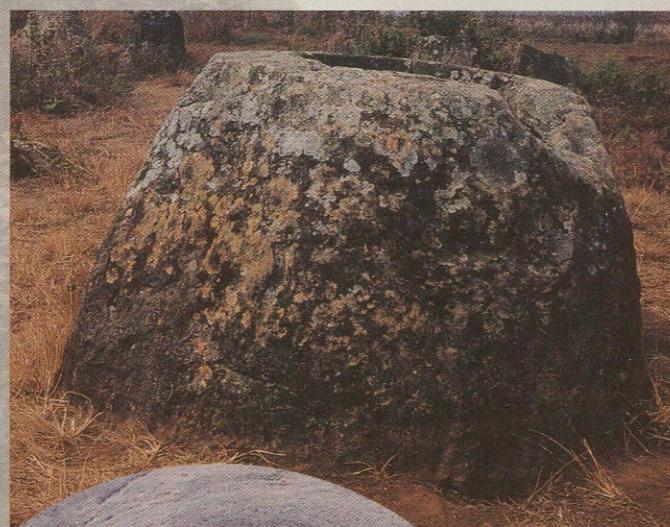


seems to have been brought from some distance away. A few of them have carved lids, which mostly lie half-buried beside them. The vast majority of them are undecorated, but at least one jar and one lid display carvings of a human figure with arms raised, a motif familiar from traditional art across the region.

Their remote location meant that they were first seen by Westerners in the 1930s; by the time they attracted scholarly interest, the area was at war, first with the colonial French and subsequently with the Americans. Laos remained neutral during the Vietnam War but was nevertheless carpet-bombed by B52s returning from Vietkong territory to their American air-bases in Thailand: it has the dubious distinction of being the most-bombed nation in the history of warfare, with two tons of ordnance dropped on it for every man, woman and child in the country. The Plain of Jars, close to the supply route of the Ho Chi Minh trail, took a pasting, and the sites are still rife with unexploded cluster bombs, frag devices and anti-personnel mines.

All this has obviously discouraged excavation, and to date only a couple of weeks of digging has taken place on the most accessible site. This revealed the presence of skeletons under some of the jars, suggesting that they may have had a role in funeral rites, but the absence of any other organic remains or evidence of habitation means that their date and the culture of their makers is still largely speculative. A local Lao archaeologist, currently studying in Australia, hopes to make a more thorough excavation soon.

There are, of course, local explanations. The most common story is that they were made by the mythical Lao hero Khun Jeum as fermentation jars for rice wine brewed to commemorate one of his famous victories: this story, however, insists that they are composed not of stone but of cement moulded inside buffalo skins. Some of the stones are still used as votive sites, and are regularly filled with clay Buddha figurines.



**ROCK GARDEN:** (Top) The densely packed jars of 'Site 3' in the forest. (Middle) The carved outline of a human figure with upraised arms is faintly visible on the right hand side of this jar. (Above) This jar is a local votive spot, filled with clay Buddha figurines.

ALL PHOTOS BY MIKE JAY

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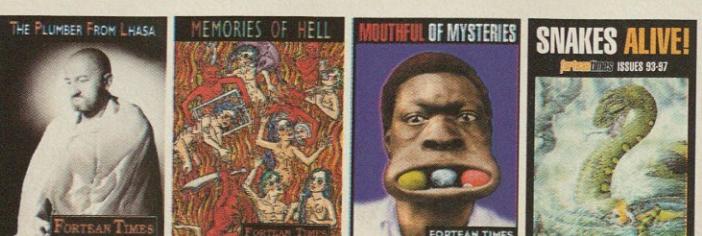
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## PSIS AND WHISPERS

## THE FUTURE ISN'T 753126...

Can we see the future as easily as we can watch yesterday's news on TV? With your help, JENNY Randles hopes we may find out during UnConvention '99.

**P**onder this... A woman wakes in the middle of the night. She leaps from under the covers and rushes to an adjacent room where her two small children sleep in bunk beds. Without stopping to think, she seizes the child from the lower berth, leaves the other child sleeping above and returns to her room. Moments later, there is a crashing sound from the children's room and, rushing to investigate, she finds that the top bunk has collapsed. The child in it is unharmed but a metal bar is now embedded into the pillow where the head of the child she has just removed would have been.

This true story is a typical premonition. If there was a presentiment of danger we might expect that the child on the top bunk - with further to fall - would have been the candidate for rescue.

Premonitions, it seems, bypass the rational mind to operate at the level of emotion. The resulting impulse must cut like a dagger through mental obstacles and shriek loud and clear in raw fashion.

Experience accrued from previous spontaneous cases and experiments suggests this is what happens. So what is the response of orthodox science when investigating the idea of precognition. I debated the subject with one celebrated physicist who had spent years devising machines and computers to generate strings of random numbers - such as 753126.

The subject was asked to 'guess' these numbers, tapping them in on a keyboard and moving on to the next guess, in an endless series. Success or failure was never indicated to the subject because the computer-generated number was never visible. The machine compared the numbers 'internally' and kept the score until, after a few hundred guesses could generate some significant statistics. If precognition was a real phenomenon, the theory went, there should be more correct guesses than allowed for by chance.

This is a fine example of an experiment that seems impressive in theory but it singularly fails to take account of the mounting boredom the subject will experience... and this in turn may have a negative effect on the results.

Indeed, if the subject actually fell asleep, it is ironic to think that this may put him or her closer to having a natural meaningful precognition as these are so often associated with dreams or dream states.

The ideal experiment has yet to be devised, but experimenters are still trying. I have devised one for the UnConvention that will allow for many participants. You can take part in it whether you come to the conference or not.

Choose a suitable night, early in the week leading up to the conference - but no earlier than Monday and no later than Wednesday - and take this issue of *FT* to bed with you (as if you wouldn't do so anyway). Immediately before settling down to sleep, re-read this article, think about what precognition means for life, the universe, time and eternity, etc. Then fall asleep as normal.

Ensure that you have a way to record on waking any dreams you may have. A tape recorder would be ideal but a pen and paper is fine. It's very important that you remain in bed a few moments after waking as dreams are harder to recall once you are up and moving around. Dream memories are fragile, so it is important to record them as soon as possible before getting out of bed. For this experiment, try to record them immediately on waking, even if you wake up during the night.

What I want you to do is to concentrate on the mood, the emotion or sensation that you remember. Even if you cannot remember any of the dream images you will be aware of how you felt during the dream. Record the feelings as best you can... but do include any images, smells, sounds and so on if you remember these too. Any scraps of information are useful.



If you are not attending the convention, try to post the results, first class, early in the week, to the following address:

'99 Dreams  
1 Hallsteads Close  
Dove Holes  
Buxton  
Derbyshire SK17 8BS.'

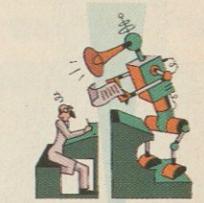
Or you can fax them (up to 9pm on Thursday) on: 01298 814 473 or email them (up to 9pm Thursday) to: brigantia@compuserve.com. Note: no letters postmarked AFTER Friday will be valid for the experiment.

If you are attending the conference, attempt the experiment later in the week - best of all would be Friday night, immediately before the start of UnCon. There will be a sealed box in the reception area for you to put your written accounts in, anonymously if you prefer. The cut-off for UnCon attendees will be noon Saturday. If you are not attending use the fax, phone or email deadlines above.

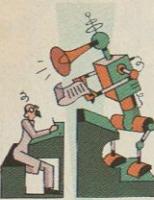
The point of the experiment will be revealed during my presentation at the convention and in a later report in *FT*. Thanks, in advance, to those who give this a try. The more who participate the more fascinating the outcome.

VETERAN UFOLOGIST JENNY Randles is the author of a number of books on ufology and the paranormal and has been involved with many TV programmes.

## FORUM







## BIG BAD KILLER EAGLES

**Alfred Hitchcock may have been onto something – birds may be little more than feathered killers.** DARREN NAISH watches the birdie and discovers his not-so-sweet cousins.

The popularity of large predatory animals might be explained by the simple fact that they can tear us limb from limb and wrench our bleeding entrails from our still-conscious bodies. Big cats, wolves, sharks, crocodiles are all animals which easily command our fear and respect. Usually omitted from this group of predators is one deserving of just as much respect – eagles. Maybe it's because eagles are birds – generally small, relatively innocuous animals – that they aren't regarded as frightening predators. Yet fortean literature is replete with tales of eagles attacking, and occasionally killing, humans.

Among the best known of all cases is that of Marie Delex, a French five-year-old who was apparently carried off and eaten by a Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) in 1838. Veteran cryptozoological researcher Richard Muirhead recently bought another such case to my attention, this time from 1791, where a four-year-old boy was borne off and killed by an eagle. This apparently occurred in Clomeny, Ireland.

Another species found in Europe, the mountain-dwelling Lammergeier or Bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*), is also anecdotally credited with causing human death, this time by physically harassing mountaineers until they plummet to their deaths! Lammergeiers are reported to kill ibex and chamois in the same way.

Such cases will always be controversial – Golden eagles are not believed to kill or carry prey bigger than rabbits or small lambs for example – but several species of tropical eagle are known to prey on and kill sizeable game. Africa's crowned eagle (*Stephanoctes coronatus*) can and does kill antelopes. Furthermore, there is a record from Zimbabwe of skull remains from a human child being found in a Crowned eagles' nest and, in Zambia, a Crowned eagle attacked and nearly killed a seven-year-old child.

We also know from fossil assemblages that large African forest eagles preyed on our own diminutive ancestors, the chimp-sized *Australopithecines*.

The Golden eagles of North America and Eurasia do not possess the firepower of Crowned eagles, let alone the incredible power manifest in the South American

Harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) – a species that seems to be adapted for killing animals far bigger than those it actually does nowadays.

Nevertheless, attacks by Golden eagles on such mammals as domestic sheep, White-tailed deer, Pronghorn antelope and Coyote are surprisingly well documented. Consider that the biggest female Golden eagles weigh 3lb (6.6kg), and are normally regarded as specialised rabbit predators.

It is amazing then that, in parts of New Mexico and Oregon, representatives of the Animal Damage Control programme have been called in to deal with cases of domestic calf death caused by Golden eagles. The biggest calf reported killed weighed 254lb (115 kg)! Impressed? You should be!

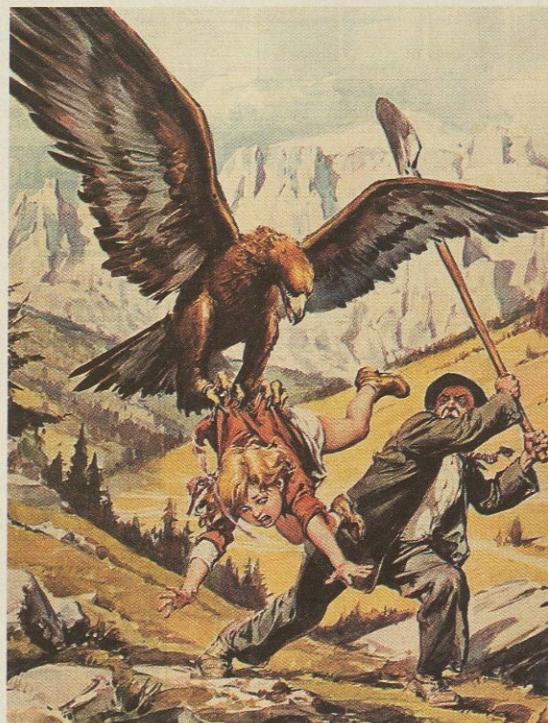
That these calf deaths were caused by eagles is irrefutable: the backs of their calves' skulls were pierced by eagle talons and eyewitness accounts of eagle attacks on calves have been reported in the technical literature. Certain ornithologists, including Leslie Brown – a man rightly described by some as the world's most authoritative eagle expert – have opined that Golden eagles are physically incapable of killing even young sheep and goats (51–60lb (23–27kg) in weight). Yet such assertions are clearly blatantly incorrect. We are dealing with awesome, powerful predators that can kill animals as much as 20 times their own body weight.

The ultimate nasty eagle story, however, comes from the land of birds itself – New Zealand – a place once dominated by the moa, a diverse group of wingless, mostly herbivorous birds. Among the biggest birds of all time, the largest moa weighed 55lb (250kg) and stood 10ft (3m) tall. Early on in their history (long before the human invasion which began about 850 years ago), moa apparently had it easy, New Zealand lacking the predators that make life difficult for flightless birds. All good things come to an end though and, among the numerous types of bird that reached New Zealand after the moa, birds of prey were included.

One eagle that evolved on New Zealand was *Harpagornis* – with a 10ft (3m) wingspan and a maximum weight of 29lb (13kg), the biggest eagle of all time – which clearly became adept at exploiting the moa resource. Available evidence shows that *Harpagornis* was able to attack and kill the biggest of all moa. According to Dr Richard Holdaway – the zoologist who has worked on this bird more than anyone else – it seems to have done so by swooping down at very high speed from the forest canopy and raking its enormous, hugely muscled talons across its prey's back. Archaeological finds show that *Harpagornis* was alive a mere 500 years ago – perhaps it died out when, at about 1600 AD, the Maori hunted its prey, the moa, into extinction.

Now, is it just coincidence that the Maori have legends of giant man-eating birds of prey, called *Pou-kai*? Jared Diamond wrote of *Harpagornis* in 1990 "One can only speculate about what this powerful specialist in attacking tall bipedal prey did when it saw the first arriving Maoris". Perhaps, as some say, there are no such things as coincidences.

DARREN NAISH IS A ZOOLOGICAL RESEARCHER AND STUDENT, PRESENTLY STUDYING THE ECOLOGY OF MARINE REPTILES. HE HAS PUBLISHED EXTENSIVELY ON MYSTERY WHALES.



BYE, BYE BIRDIE: Young Marie Delex carried off by a Golden eagle.

## TUTANKHAMUN & THE TRINITY

**Biblical prophecy states that the Messiah will come "out of Egypt". Here, AHMED OSMAN provides some interesting evidence that this saviour may well have been Tutankhamun.**

In his account of Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision* (FT118: 40–45), Niklas Rasche referred to my argument of the similarities between Pharaoh Akhenaten and both Moses of the Bible and Oedipus of Greek mythology. Tom Holland had, in an earlier issue (FT117: 28–31), given more details of my identification of Akhenaten with Moses, and went on to say: "The naming of Akhenaten as the founder of the Jewish religion seems positively restrained compared with Osman's real bombshell, his revelation that Tutankhamun had, in fact, been Jesus Christ."

The early Fathers of the Church accepted that Jesus appeared, not once, but twice: First in the person of Joshua the son of Nun, who succeeded Moses as the leader of the Israelites in the 14th century BC then, when in his Glory, he appeared to the disciples in the 1st century AD. 'Jesus' is the Greek form of Joshua, which appeared for the first time in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, made in Alexandria during the 3rd century BC.

When the Gospels were written, also in Greek, it was understood that Jesus Christ was the same person as the Israelite leader who succeeded Moses. The confusion between the two forms of the name only appeared from the 16th century onwards, when the Bible was translated into English. Only then the name 'Joshua' was given to the Old Testament character, while 'Jesus' was used for his New Testament appearance.

As I've come to the conclusion that Akhenaten was the same as Moses, I also concluded that Akhenaten's successor was the same as the leader who succeeded Moses. Akhenaten, king of Egypt (1378–1361 BC), was the first monotheistic ruler in history. He abolished the worship of the different gods of Ancient Egypt and introduced a deity with no image – the 'Aten', biblical Adonai – to be the sole God for all people. In his year 17, Akhenaten was overthrown by a military coup when he used the army to force the new religion on his people, and was replaced by Tutankhamun in 1361 BC. Akhenaten then went to exile in Sinai, accompanied by some of his followers. Recognising that ordinary people need a physical object for their worship, Tutankhamun allowed the ancient deities to be worshipped again, but only as mediators between Aten and his people.

Ernest Sellin, a German biblical scholar, had found textual evidence to suggest that an Israelite leader was murdered in Sinai, and Sigmund Freud thought this leader was Moses. The Israelites, he thought, killed Moses as they resented his strict teachings. I was able, however, to identify the assassinated leader as Joshua the son of Nun, successor of Moses. It was Phinehas the priest of Moses, whom I've identified with Pa-Nehesy, the high priest of Akhenaten, who killed Joshua. While the Israelites were still in the land of Goshen in Egypt, Pa-Nehesy killed Tutankhamun at the foot of Mount Sinai, as he regarded him a heretic who allowed back paganism.

In the tomb of Tutankhamun there is a unique scene, not found in any other Egyptian burial, representing the Trinity of Christ. The profound significance of the wall-painting escaped me until November 1997 when I was invited by General Mohamed Yusef, the then governor of the city of Luxor, to speak in the city hall as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the tomb's discovery.

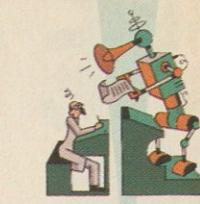
Afterwards I was privileged to have a private visit to the tomb. As I stood alone, gazing at the painting of the burial chamber on the north wall, I realised for the first time that I was looking at the strongest pictorial evidence linking Tutankhamun and Christ.

The painting is divided into three separate scenes. The first scene on the right shows Aye, already crowned as the king's successor, who nevertheless is also officiating as a priest dressed in the leopard skin, performing the ritual of 'the opening of the mouth' for resuscitation of the dead Tutankhamun, who is shown as a risen Osiris.

The middle scene shows Tutankhamun entering the heavenly realm of the gods and being welcomed there by the sky goddess Nut.



LOOK OF THE DEAD: Tutankhamun pictured in his tomb as Osiris (Father), Horus (Son) and his Ka (Holy Ghost).



## LETTERS

# LETTERS



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## SECRET SEVEN

In the August/September 1998 issue of *Nexus* magazine, I read a story entitled "Revelations of a refugee from 1999". The information in the story was apparently posted to Art Bell from a time traveller. In "The bell tolls for Art" [FT119:49] Bruce Wright implies that the time traveller (aka "Single Seven") was not real - but how can he be sure? Can anyone tell me more about this?

JAYNE BRAITHWAITE  
Ewell, Surrey

## WITCHCRAFT IN IRELAND

In reply to Gary Moss [Letters, FT120:53], Phil Bond was entirely right. In my original column in FT118, the witchcraft laws in question were described as "Irish". Since Irish law only applies in the Republic of Ireland - I am reliably informed that other parts of Ireland have other arrangements - I had hoped this would be self-explanatory.

THE HIEROPHANT

## YEAR ZERO?

Twice now in your admirable 'Pre-Millennial Tension' series [FT119:21, 120:21] you have suggested that when Dionysius Exiguus established our modern calendar of "years of our Lord", he made a mistake by omitting the year "0 AD" - "as the concept of zero did not exist in sixth century Western mathematics". Two recent writers on the subject have made a similar point: Stephen Jay Gould in *Questioning the Millennium* and David Ewing Duncan in *The Calendar*.

Surely 'Tiny Denis' was just using common sense and would not have done things differently even if he had known about zero. When counting anything, whether sheep, green bottles or years, it's usual to start with 'one'. What comes before sheep number one is nothing, not sheep number zero.

John B. Carlson PhD

Director, the Center for Archaeoastronomy, PO Box X, College Park, MD 20741-3022 USA

RICHARD HALL

past chairman, Fund for UFO Research, PO Box 277, Mt Rainier, MD 20712 USA; past editor, INFO Journal

Jesus would have lived the first year of his life ('year one') between his birth and his first birthday. People hold their 21st birthday party at the end of the 21st year of their life, not at its beginning. For calendar purposes only (regardless of when - or if - he was actually born) we have to assume that Jesus was born just as an anachronistic clock was striking midnight to usher in the first day of the first month of the first 'year of our Lord': 1 January, AD 1. And that same midnight ended the year that had passed before he was born - literally 'before Christ'. The year before AD 1 is by definition '1 BC'; there's no room for a 'year zero' in between.

JOHN CLARK  
London

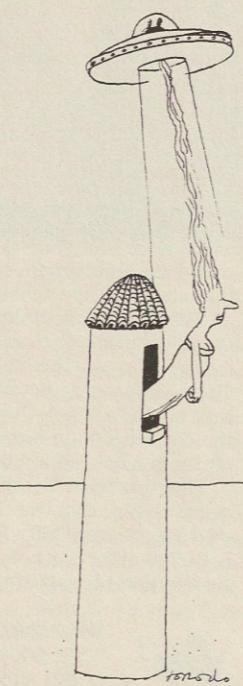
Bob Rickard replies: I'm glad to hear the INFO side of the affair of what must have been a difficult time for all concerned. Paul Willis might have put a brave face on it for a while and even appreciated the necessity for this timely act of salvage. But I have no doubt that, however it happened, he became angry and disappointed by the affair whenever he thought about the loss of his books in later years.

ROSE-MARY COWER  
Mold, Flintshire

## PAUL WILLIS

The reported death of Paul J Willis, fortean extraordinaire, is very sad. We both knew and liked Paul personally, and recognised his talents. He had a deep knowledge of fortean phenomena, combined with the requisite sense of humour. We were also aware of his inability at times to deal with real-world situations. He was a very intelligent, creative, artistic person. At the same time, he lived in a private and imaginative world of his own where he withdrew from the practical realities of day-to-day existence. He could not deal with business responsibilities.

It was disturbing to read in Bob Rickard's obituary of Paul [FT120:44] that we engaged in a "palace coup" and "seized" his files. This is not true. After the death of his brother Ron, Paul simply abandoned the files and we acted to preserve them for posterity and to try to continue INFO [the International Fortean Organisation]. In fact, we constantly consulted Paul in an



## WAR OF THE WORLDS

Reading Bob Rickard's piece on Orson Welles' notorious War of the Worlds radio broadcast and mass panic, a couple of points struck me. "Ample public notices were given before, and during the play," he states. This is true, but certain other factors must also be taken into account.

The weekly *Mercury Theatre On the Air* programme was deliberately scheduled in direct opposition to a top-rated comedy show on CBS's rival network. Many Americans' first choice of listening was the show with ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his dummy Charlie McCarthy. A few minutes into his programme was a musical number, during which many listeners would re-tune their radios to sample what was on offer on the other network. Any listeners tuning in late to CBS would then be plunged straight into the action of Welles' play, having missed the opening announcements. Because of the "documentary" format of the dramatisation,

JOHN DOCHERTY

it's possible some listeners may have mistaken the fiction for actuality.

The article claims that Welles admitted the play was a Hallowe'en prank, "Mercury Theatre's own version of dressing up in a sheet." He did, but not until the very end of the programme, by which time the alleged "panic" would already be well underway.

There was also a brief station identification announcement about halfway through the programme, but other than this, the action is uninterrupted and played as "real".

The only contemporary documentation of the supposed mass panic which ensued seems to come from newspaper reports the morning after the broadcast. There is good evidence to suggest that the media had been tipped off well in advance by Welles himself, whose Mercury Theatre stage company needed a boost. That the broadcast turned Orson Welles into a household name overnight is a fact. The stories of panic and hysteria it allegedly triggered appear to have been a media creation.

RITCHIE HARDIN  
Lincoln

## DAZZLED BY THE LIGHT

With reference to "Bubbling Rivers of Flames" and follow-up concerning mysterious lights viewed on the Mae Khong River [FT105:22, 19:25], it would seem a rather large coincidence that the Illuminated Boat Festival, a key ceremonial date for the people of the Nakhon Phanom, takes place at this time. Ablaze with decorative lights, the boats parade down the river at the full moon in October, to celebrate the ending of the Buddhist Rains Retreat. Festivals keyed to the full moon are a feature in Thailand; for example the Prathad Phanom Festival in late February. Furthermore, the practice of launching a krathong (a kind of illuminated cradle containing a candle) on the water is traditional, for instance during the Sai Loi Krathong at Tak, keyed to the full moon in November.

I cannot say why the witness observed lights emerging from underwater and shooting into the sky, except that the optical illusion explanation, offered in *New Scientist*, appears plausible. Nor am I sure whether fireworks are set off, but since the Nakhon Phanom event is a time of general celebration and festivities, this does not seem unlikely. I love a mystery as well as the next man, and I always hear a dull thud somewhere in the soul when one is brought down, but in this case at least, I think we might have to conclude that someone, somewhere was having their leg pulled.

A ASHANEN CARMEN  
Edinburgh, Scotland

## FAIRY RINGS

Barbara Burkowsky's photograph [FT119:51] almost certainly shows a "Fairy Ring". Such rings of vegetation are common and are due to the activity of a fungus growing just under the soil surface. The mycelium ("body") of the fungus comprises many fine hyphae (thread-like structures) which grow out in a circle from a central point of origin, much like a colony of mould on the surface of jam in a jar. The older hyphae towards the centre of the colony die, leaving the younger ones around the circumference.

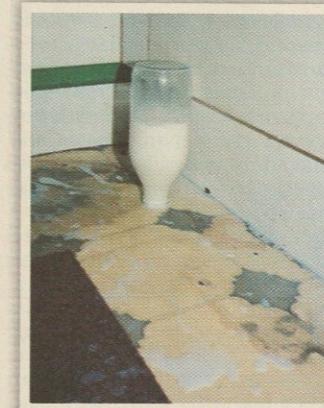
These feed by decomposing dead vegetation underground, releasing nutrients in the process. The uptake of these nutrients contributes to luxuriant growth of vegetation, producing the ring of dark green grass shown in the photograph. Superstitious folk have believed these rings to be the site of "fairy dances", hence their name. However, their true nature is revealed sooner or later when a circle of fruiting bodies (mushrooms, but not necessarily edible!) appears.

DR TOM GAYNARD  
[TJCaynard@aol.com](mailto:TJCaynard@aol.com)

## FLUKE LANDING

I was preparing lunch on Christmas Day 1998 and went to move an item on a kitchen worktop when I accidentally knocked over a three-quarters-full glass milk bottle with its foil top removed. I tried to grab it, but wasn't quick enough and it fell to the floor, a distance of 35in (90cm). I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the bottle had landed perfectly upside-down on the lino, trapping nearly all the milk within, with just a small amount lost to splashes. This photograph was taken about 30 seconds after the event (you can still see bubbles in the bottle). No further milk seeped out.

HELCA REYNOLDS  
Abingdon, Oxfordshire



## LETTERS



## SHIP RICHT?

With reference to the "Sail of the (last) century" [FT119:11]: I would take issue with the description of the phantom vessel as being a three-masted schooner, whereas the picture clearly shows a three-masted barque! I felt I just had to get my oar in, so to speak.

T A EMBLEM-ENGLISH  
Chingford, London

The photo of the supposed ghost ship looks like the Russian clipper, the *Sedov*, which was visiting the UK in May last year. I went aboard her while she was moored at Chatham on May Bank Holiday for the Rochester Chimney Sweeps Festival.

MIKE SLATER  
Bristol

## WRECK REVISIONS

I read with interest Andrew Homer's letter [FT119:53]. The story about the haunting of Chambercombe Manor is given on page 50 of *The World's Greatest Ghosts* by Roger Boar and Nigel Blundell (Octopus Books 1983). Entitled "The Smiling Spectre", the story varies in certain details.

William's wife was a young Spanish girl he had saved from a ship which had been wrecked as a result of his father's actions. When he and his wife returned to Chambercombe Manor, William did not become a wrecker and smuggler like his father; although the rent was high, they could afford it. The ship which carried William's daughter Kate sank during a vicious storm, and not by the actions of a wrecking crew. William robbed her after she died and only because he succumbed to temptation. William and his wife learnt of their daughter's identity after a visit from an admiralty official making inquiries about a missing passenger. Kate's remains were discovered by a man looking down through a hole in the roof he was rathatching.

There is no mention of William's ghost or his confession.

GARY WATSON  
Cramlington, Northumberland



## MARTELLO GHOST?

This picture was taken on 20 July 1926 by Mr HW Gill, a photographer for Folkestone Borough Council. He had been asked to take pictures of lightning damage to Martello Tower No.3, just outside Folkestone in Kent. A number of people had gathered in front of the tower and Mr Gill asked them to move; but he changed his mind and told a boy who had not moved to stay in shot for scale. The original picture shows the whole tower – only the lower section is shown here. On developing the picture, Mr Gill and his colleagues were amazed to see the transparent second figure apparently holding the boy's arm. They thought it might be a ghost.

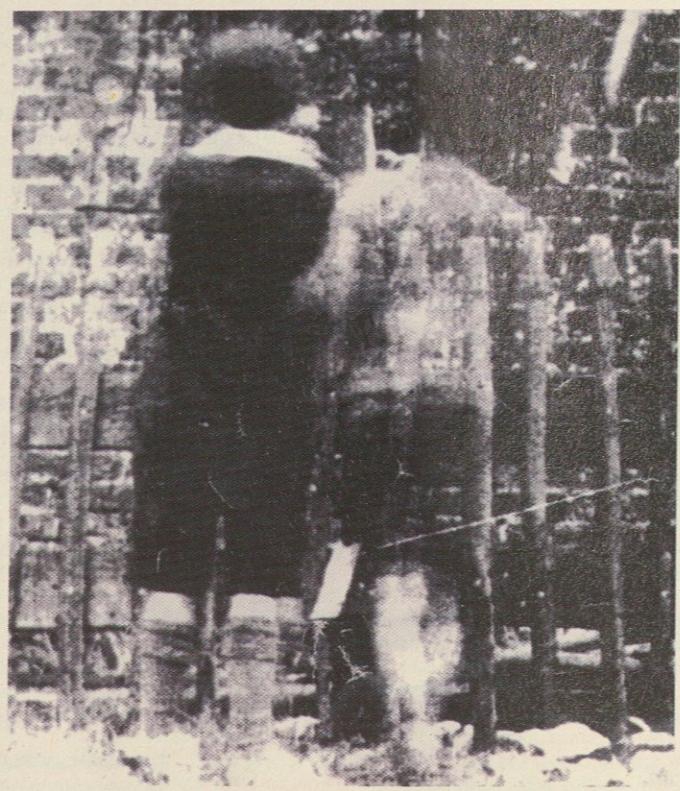
Perhaps I can shed some light on the debate between Poe and Barrett [FT118:50, 120:20] about whether Charlemagne was literate or illiterate. In fact, both are correct. As Alcuin and others report (see for example, Jacques Delperrière de Bayau: *Karl der Grosse*, Stuttgart 1998, p. 32), it is true that Charlemagne spoke – beside his native Frankish – Latin and Greek. He also could read Latin script, but he never managed to learn to write. So, in a sense, he was both literate and illiterate.

ULRICH MACIN  
Rastatt, Germany

## PHANTOM CENSOR

I had not finished FT120 when I decided to go to bed and left it in the living room. The following morning, I discovered the centre page (pp33-36), including the opening of the 'Forbidden Arkeology' feature, ripped from the magazine and torn up. My wife had no idea how this happened, she having retired before me. We have no pets and I am sure that no-one broke into our house just to rip up one page from one magazine. Did anyone else experience a similar incident?

DUNCAN McDONALD  
Vesuvius Consultants Ltd



## FISHY EXPLANATION

The article "Claw Men From Outer Space" by Steve Sessions [FT119:38-43] contains many zany and intriguing bits of reasoning which make it as difficult to believe as the original "fishing tale" told by Hickson and Parker in 1973. Sessions suggests that this one case gave birth to the entire UFO-related entertainment industry, implying that *Close Encounters* and *The X-Files* among many others would never have existed if these two fishermen had not been terrorised by aliens whose hands resembled mittens or crab claws. The absurdity of this idea speaks for itself.

The failure of nearby bridge attendants and security cameras to notice anything that night is interesting. The failure of Sessions to mention the up-close sighting of a large craft hovering over a street-light in Pascagoula at around the same time is interesting also.

To his credit, Sessions doesn't try to completely debunk the case the way Philip Klass did. Klass filed it under the catch-all category of hoaxing-for-financial-gain, although there is no evidence for this. In fact, Hickson fired his lawyer, Joe Colingo, saying: "Colingo just wanted to make a buck." Also, to his credit, Sessions realises that premeditated hoaxing is almost certainly ruled out by the fact that when Hickson and Parker were tape-recorded at the police station by themselves, without their knowledge, they kept their same story and terrified demeanour.

## THE YOLK'S ON HIM

The only remarkable feature that I can see concerning Mrs Aneka Turták's deformed hen's egg [FT117:6] is that a man styling himself the general manager of a poultry farm should claim never to have seen one in "all his working life".

Sessions' only way out is to believe the whole thing was merely a waking nightmare experienced by Hickson, whose terror and fright somehow transferred (and increased dramatically) to the younger and supposedly impressionable Parker. How impressionable would he have to be to accept someone else's bad dream as his own, going so far as to be more traumatised and visibly shaken than the original dreamer?

How impressionable would one have to be to make the nightmare their own to the point of crying, quaking with terror, praying out loud (in front of disbelieving policemen), and experiencing mental and emotional problems for years afterwards? How many times do nightmares have this effect on the experience alone rather than someone who happens to be in the vicinity? This fable that Sessions has cooked up is pretty hard to swallow.

I propose a new term for ufology – the "Klass limit" or bullshit believability barrier. This is the point at which any debunker's argument becomes more improbable and difficult to accept that the actual bizarre incident they are trying to explain away. It's easier for me to accept that claw men from outer space terrorised these two fishermen than to fall for Steve Sessions' explanation.

MICHAEL H MCQUATE  
San Francisco, California

ROY DENT  
ardent@cix.co.uk

## CRAFTY CHRISTIANS

I was enthralled to read Phyllis Sieffker's description of the ancient precursors of modern Christmas folklore [FT118:34-37]. I was particularly struck by the appearance of so many persistently recurring elements within the enactment of the death and rebirth ritual. Readers may be interested to note that many of these elements form the basis of another popular story with strong Yuletide associations, told to this day.

In this tale, the bearded man or 'king' is captured and put in chains. He is flogged and forced to carry his tree trunk to the top of a hill through jeering crowds throwing missiles. At the top, he is nailed to his own tree and punctured with a spear, rather than an arrow. He wears the customary wreath, not of ivy, but of thorns. He dies to the usual accompaniment of angry elements: earthquakes and preternatural darkness terrify the onlookers.

Three days later, as a weeping woman visits his tomb, she finds him resurrected! The newly-risen king and his gang waltz off to visit all and sundry, receiving bread and fish left, right and centre – déjà vu or what?

It seems that, rather than suppress the pagan ritual as Sieffker suggests, the crafty Christians decided to go one better and make it the centrepiece of their entire religious calendar. It should be added that in this version of the myth, rumours of the traditional sexual relations between the bearded man-god and the weeping woman (Mary Magdalene – John, xx.15) are hotly denied by official sources.

PHILIP E JAMES  
Guildford, Surrey

I was much intrigued by Phyllis Sieffker's article "The Last Wild Man" and particularly the Jolly Old Elf's previous incarnation in traditional mumming plays (as the Fool).

What really caught my attention was his man/woman companion, Bessy. As all students of the Drama (and all has-been comedians) know, the panto season, coinciding with the Christmas festivities, features one of the major elements of British humour – the cross-dressed comic. Having its roots in both the Commedia dell'arte and traditional mummery, might it not be that the pantomime Dame has perpetuated the survival of Bessy, rather as Coca-Cola gave Santa his suit?

Perhaps we have a Last Wild Man/Woman still romping at the end of the year, though John Inman probably doesn't see himself in that capacity!

COFF MORGAN  
Newport, Gwent

## CALL FOR BACK-UP

In "Nags to Witches" [FT119:28], Frans Prins and Sian Hall do not give the sources of their information and seem over-concerned with what people believed in the South African Iron Age, which can be no more than conjecture. They imply that beliefs have not altered in 2,000 years, but are "survivals" from the past "primitive" people, untouched by the civilising influence of the 20th century and the Western world.

It is stated that the San bushmen did not practice witchcraft until Bantu-speaking agriculturalists brought "a new and complex system of beliefs" around 2,000 years ago. How can we possibly know?

The authors also rather simplistically explain the functional benefits of witchcraft as a "means of resolving social conflict and stress", ignoring its many other aspects, such as its ability to empower women. They discuss the "African mentality" as a whole and imply that everyone in "traditional" society (whatever that is) thinks the same way. This is obviously not the case.

KAREN TVEIT  
Rochester, Kent

The closing remarks of Frans Prins and Sian Hall raise some questions: "The African mentality interprets the world through fortune or misfortune. Any

domestic or social calamity is cause for suspicion of witchcraft." Africa is not a country, culture or specific population; do the authors have in mind the whole continental land mass and entire population? Or do qualifying assumptions lie behind the term "African" here? If so, what might they be? Does "mentality" refer to a specific form of mind innate within and characteristic of this population (where have we heard this before?) which produces and operates "magical" cultural practices?

The authors also tell us that: "[Witchcraft] is in the forefront of people's minds... each person experiences a projection of their own personal fears within the communal consensus about the outside threat."

We can see the interaction between psychology and culture across the whole globe and the whole of human history. If we were to remove the limitation of any specific "African mentality", perhaps we could agree with this in some broad sense, and point to many phenomena to substantiate it – such as the Solar Temple suicides, the millions who believe in abduction by aliens, psychic phenomena, and the "magical" delusions of countless moral panics, religious upheavals or social ideologies (such as racism or fascism). Obviously these are attenuated by national and local cultural and political processes, as well as individual susceptibility.

DAVID ABDI  
Sheffield, Yorkshire

## FOCUSED BEAM

In reply to the "Sea Beam" photo and query from Nick Bloxham [FT117:51], I think the explanation might be quite simple. Here is a photo taken in the Orkney Islands many years ago showing the identical effect. A light source as small as the sun (in relation to our idea of the "size" of the sky) at that distance will automatically produce a "parallel" – or at least a hard-edged – beam of light much like a focused spotlight. Combined with the very low angle in relation to the reflecting surface as well as the low viewing angle, the effect is to be expected. Absence of sufficient wind and tide to create ripples or waves is also a necessity of course, as well as cloud banks to enhance the light and shade effect; probably not something that happens very often.



What really caught my attention was his man/woman companion, Bessy. As all students of the Drama (and all has-been comedians) know, the panto season, coinciding with the Christmas festivities, features one of the major elements of British humour – the cross-dressed comic. Having its roots in both the Commedia dell'arte and traditional mummery, might it not be that the pantomime Dame has perpetuated the survival of Bessy, rather as Coca-Cola gave Santa his suit?

Not wishing to take away all the mystique though, the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch had a soft spot for this magical phenomenon. The motif turns up in several of his works created by both the sun and moon; see for example *The Voice*, *Moonrise (Alpha and Omega)* and particularly *The Dance of Life*.

DAVID JEFFERY  
Cöteborg, Sweden

There is a similar (but decidedly not identical) phenomenon to Nick Bloxham's 'sea beam' that occurs in the Boulder-Denver area of Colorado, where I once lived. In the winter, on occasion, the air in that region is so still that ice crystals in it line up flat and parallel to the ground. If you happen to be driving at night when this happens, you can see, above the lights of approaching cars, vertical columns or beams of light that go up into the sky. Other lights show similar columns. I'm sure this occurs in other places as well. (Apropos of things aerial, the Boulder area also has an astonishing number of instances of iridescent clouds, sometimes in surprisingly rich colours.)

JON SINGER  
Bellevue, Washington



## CIA IMPLANT?

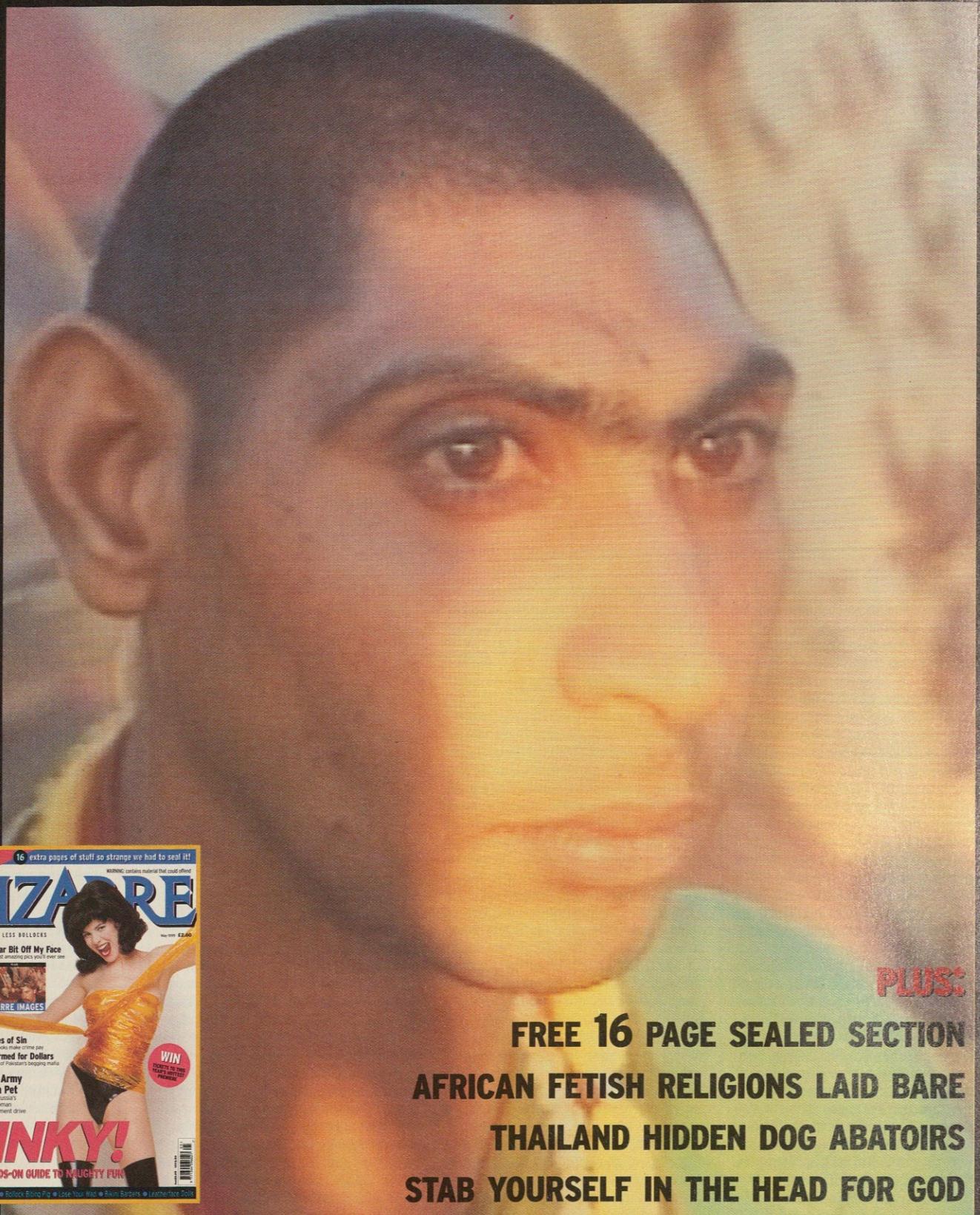
We write to express some alarm at Uri Dowbenko's review of Whitley Strieber's *Confirmation* [FT117:57]. He has not criticised the book, but only presented his own speculations on mind control and the CIA – which are quite absurd. For example he appears to be suggesting that a strange object that Schreiber claims was removed from his ear was in fact CIA equipment for mind control. If so, then I (MB), as a neurologist and researcher in brain imaging, would be very interested to hear how he thinks this equipment might work.

And has he not noticed that descriptions of mind control sound very much like common or garden psychosis, the symptoms of which are well known to every student of psychology? It is not the fortean way to accept that something is true, merely because it is written in a book. All this we might forgive, but the result is that we finish reading the review with no feeling for the book itself, combined with a painful exasperation at the reviewer. We find FT to be an oasis of reason in a world hungry for superstition, and believe this review does your journal no credit.

KATE & MATTHEW BRETT  
mbrett@curpms.ac.uk

# What's the damage?

EXPOSED: THE MEN WHO DELIBERATELY DEFORM CHILDREN FOR PROFIT



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**BIZARRE**

Issue 20 out 13 April 1999

ANOTHER STRANGE AND DISTURBING MAGAZINE FROM JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING

MULTIMEDIA REVIEWS PAGE 58

## MARS, HERE WE COME!



**THE CASE FOR MARS**  
ROBERT ZUBRIN &  
RICHARD WAGNER

Simon & Schuster, London, 1996, hb  
£16.99, pp238, index, refs, notes,  
illus. ISBN 0-6848-1930-9

1aaaa

Both this book, and Robert Zubrin's concept of a low-tech/fast-track colonisation of Mars, have already become historic in more ways than one. Since its 1996 publication, events have rapidly undermined its aspirations thus making it a text of its time. Today the International Space Station takes financial precedence while manned exploration of the red planet has been sidelined in favour of a less expensive, remotely operated approach.

A second history can be found, behind this textual one, in the fact that the book also provides a potent record of major Mars observations – listing as it does such familiar moments as the misinterpretation of Giovanni Schiaparelli's 'canali' by the ever hopeful Percival Lowell. But it is a third conflicting history – which Zubrin unwittingly writes between the lines – that is of most interest.

On one side, the reader is encouraged to envisage Mars as a space where the influence of science and science fiction have produced a fertile land of the imagination – a space into which something entirely new has the potential to develop. This is a land of genetically engineered life where goats are considered the most suitable domestic creatures (despite concerns about their 'bounce' in 0.38G) and where the colonists' habitats walk on legs (recalling H G Wells' Martian tripods).

However, opposing this stance is an America-centric perspective, locked into recycling ideals of the 'frontier', while at the same time trying to manipulate big business as a means of securing funding. It

ships depicted by such fiction writers as Kim Stanley Robinson and Philip K Dick. *The Case for Mars* is hard SF in its purest form with the individual displaced in favour of concerns about hardware.

At times, this can give the book a 'back to school' quality (that is if you were ever educated in the chemistry of propellants etc) which unfortunately leaves no room for the more messy personal issues.

However, the consequences of such a planetary leap are manifold and unpredictable. Perhaps Zubrin's business-driven utopia is our best option for getting there as soon as possible. (The evidence for this is strong when you consider that he is

**IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A  
TECHNICALLY POLISHED  
IMAGE OF LIFE ON MARS,  
LOOK NO FURTHER**

With such conservative incentives, there is no doubt that Mars offers an attractive area for corporate investment, but at what cost to the quality of life? Colonial history has been, inherently, a chronicle of action, risk and disregard for long-term consequence – all acceptable traits in the name of successful endeavour. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that these same traits can also create a selective memory of the past (something that is evident in Zubrin's own rosy perspective of American colonisation).

As a result, the overall picture of human life on Mars is a naïve one lacking the complexities and hard-

currently trying to establish a prototype habitat in the Arctic desert; check out [www.marsociety.org](http://www.marsociety.org)

Then again, perhaps we will discover a place so inhospitable that only the chemical highs of 'Chew Z' (from Dick's *Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*) can hope to alleviate endemic depression.

Ultimately, if you're looking for a technically polished image of life on Mars, look no further than this book. If you prefer your prose with a dash of the human factor, then some fictional accompaniment is definitely recommended.

JONATHAN BRYANT

RATING SYSTEM
1aaaa
EXCELLENT
1aaaa
GREAT
1aaaa
GOOD
1aaaa
FAIR
1aaaa
BAD
1
EXECRABLE



REVIEWS

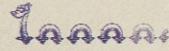




## THE ULTIMATE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FANTASY

DAVID PRINCE, ED.

Carlton Books, London, 1998, hb £19.99, index, illus. ISBN 1-8586-8373-4



Just what it says on the jacket. This large-format, glossy, full-colour book is a genuine treasure chest and really useful reference work.

Every section is well-written and well-researched, covering the different types of fantasy fiction, fantasy cinema, fantasy games, fantasy on TV, fantasy worlds, fantasy magazines... and two A-Z sections on authors, etc and on fantasy characters.

Excellent.

BOB RICKARD

## VOYAGE BEYOND DOUBT

BRUCE MOEN

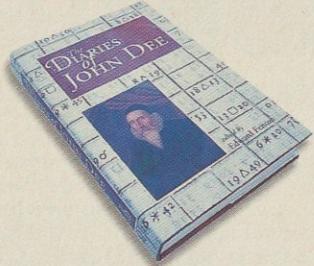
Hampton Roads Books, 134 Burgess Lane, Charlottesville, VA 22902, USA, 1998, pb £8.59, pp295, glossary. ISBN 1-5717-4101-1



Bruce Moen, an engineer from Colorado, is a graduate of the Monroe

Institute, famous for teaching 'astral projection'. Moen applies his out-of-body experiences to rescuing the lost and confused souls of the recently deceased, moving them on to something called the next 'Focus' or stage of being. The narrative is interesting, sincere, well-written and knowledgeable – but ultimately unconvincing because so much is purely subjective.

BOB RICKARD



## THE DIARIES OF JOHN DEE

EDWARD FENTON, ED.

Day Books, 3 Park Street, Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PS, UK 1998, hb £18.99, illus, refs, appendices, indices, gazetteer, glossary, biographical notes, bib. ISBN 0-9532-2130-X



John Dee – court magician to Queen Elizabeth, spy and angelic conversationalist – continues to influence magical practice and philosophy to the

present day; these diaries provide an eloquent testimony as to why this should be the case.

Although a flawed version of the diaries has been in and out of print for a century and a half, the publishers claim that this is the first definitive and (almost) complete edition.

Dee lived in incredible times – he saw the dissolution of the monasteries, the Reformation, and the opening of the Americas. It is a testament to the diligence of the editor that this volume is as good a history of the period as it is a personal record.

Like Newton after him, Dee was a truly extraordinary personality, a polymathic intellectual and philosophical powerhouse, working at a time when the boundaries between what we would now call 'magic' and 'science' were much less clearly defined than they are now.

Again like Newton, Dee was very much at the heart of his times, as can clearly be seen from the cast list here: monarchs, emperors and a pope or two all cross his path. He coined the

phrase 'the British Empire' and chose Elizabeth I's coronation day for its astrological suitability.

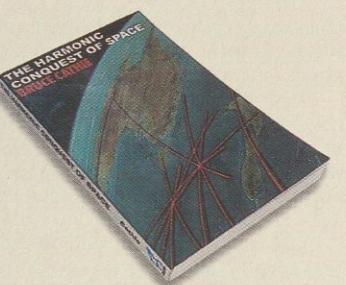
Sadly, some of the more dramatic episodes in his life disappear into lacunae; there is, for example, a six-year gap in the first years of the 17th century during which his wife and son died and Dee himself was driven from his post at Manchester University accused of dealings with Satan.

As well as Dee's own omissions, the publishers have – for reasons of space – left out the majority of his accounts of his spirit conversations; a pity, but understandable, since they would have required several supplementary volumes.

The diaries proper are wonderfully framed by lucid and well-referenced historical, biographical and geographical notes.

This is a beautiful work of pure scholarship, an edition suitable for serious study, and serious kudos is due to Day Books for setting it before us.

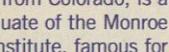
JOE McNALLY



## THE HARMONIC CONQUEST OF SPACE

BRUCE CATHIE

Adventures Unlimited Press, Kempton, IL 60946, USA, 1998, \$16.95, pp208, index, illus. ISBN 0-9328-1362-3



Bruce Moen, an engineer from Colorado, is a graduate of the Monroe

Institute, famous for teaching 'astral projection'. Moen applies his out-of-body experiences to rescuing the lost and confused souls of the recently deceased, moving them on to something called the next 'Focus' or stage of being. The narrative is interesting, sincere, well-written and knowledgeable – but ultimately unconvincing because so much is purely subjective.

BOB RICKARD

Throughout the book, credible observations and pertinent questions about a number of fortean subjects are obscured by the perpetual layer of figures – a discussion of anomalous structures on the Moon being one good example. But these moments are enervated by less convincing theories; eg that nuclear weapons can only be detonated at specific times and locations, therefore making World War III an impossibility. Large sections of the book are dedicated to this redundant idea and, despite the fact that Cathie alleges to have accurately predicted a nuclear test at Amchitka Island, we only have his word to go on.

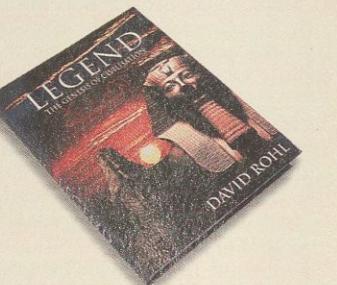
Other irksome matters include an annoying habit of slipping into capitals whenever he has a point to make. Also, nothing escapes his passion to quantify in numbers, from Rennes-le-Chateau to an anomalous image recorded by an underwater research vessel in 1968.

There is a distinct 'tour guide' feel to Cathie's description of his global travels in search of other mysteries to explain via his system. This is never more evident than in the chapter on the harmonic similarity between Ayer's Rock and Stone Mountain, Georgia. In fact, so incredibly interchangeable are these two natural structures in his view of things that the captions for both have been switched, adding eerie nebulosity to the chapter.

In *Legend*, formerly orthodox egyptologist David Rohl expands upon the theories he first proposed in his book *A Test of Time*; that Biblical and Egyptian chronology can be made to match if Biblical chronology is expanded backwards to the Bronze Age and Egyptian chronology is shortened (mainly by proposing that several dynasties were concurrent rather than consecutive).

Cathie is obviously on a mission and, if you have the time and diligence to examine his numerical workings, perhaps you too will achieve enlightenment. Then again, perhaps not.

JONATHAN BRYANT



## LEGEND THE GENESIS OF CIVILISATION

DAVID ROHL

Century/Random House, London, 1997, hb £20, pp454, plates, notes, index, biblio. ISBN 0-7126-7747-X



Egyptology has a long tradition of fringe egyptologists becoming orthodox, from Flinders Petrie to Mark Lehner, so when one goes in the other direction it's a fortean event of some note.

In *Legend*, formerly orthodox egyptologist David Rohl expands upon the theories he first proposed in his book *A Test of Time*; that Biblical and Egyptian chronology can be made to match if Biblical chronology is expanded backwards to the Bronze Age and Egyptian chronology is shortened (mainly by proposing that several dynasties were concurrent rather than consecutive).

Continuing the exercise, Rohl now claims that he's discovered the location of Eden; correlated Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Hebrew

mythology into a single coherent whole; and proved that Pharaonic Egypt was founded by invaders from Asia Minor.

Rohl presents his ideas like a Talmudic scholar weaving a web of logic; what is 'suggested' in one chapter is 'as we have seen' in the next and 'archaeologically attested' thereafter. Although well presented, the book is written in a folksy pseudo-travelogue style that I found particularly annoying.

He makes much of minimal evidence – such as Petrie's rushed examination of pre-dynastic graves – and neglects to explain how other data – (like the eruption of Thera or the carving on the anomalous Qustul incense burner) fit into his scheme.

He omits to mention that the Caucasian skull shape is shared by Eurasians and several African peoples, so no sound inference of racial origin can be drawn from skull shape alone.

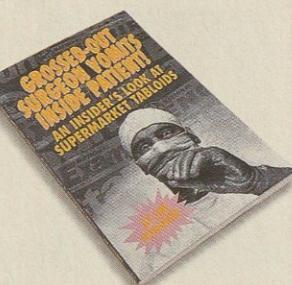
And he neglects alternative explanations; I could see his rediscovery of Hans Winkler's *Valley of the Boat People* being cited by Orthodox and Afrocentrist Egyptologists as evidence, if not proof, of the Copper Age empire of the semi-legends 'Sesotris'.

Rohl's ideas are rejected by almost everyone – orthodox and fringe – although, by resurrecting Petrie's 'Dynamic Race' theory, he'll become popular with Jewish and Christian Fundamentalists and White Supremists. For this reason alone, forteans should become

familiar with his arguments.

Overall, Rohl's research is valid even if his conclusions are suspect.

BARBARA BARRETT



## CROSSED OUT SURGEON VOMITS INSIDE PATIENT! AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT SUPERMARKET TABLOIDS

JIM HOGSHIRE

Feral House, Suite 359, 532 Lincoln Blvd, Venice, CA 90291, USA, 1998, \$12.95, 147pp, biblio, index. ISBN 0-9229-1542-3



The rendered 3D graphics used to illustrate *FT115*'s Aurora crash piece recently turned up as "real 19th century" photos in the *Weekly World News*

so this overview of America's infamous tabloids is particularly relevant – and welcome.

Hogshire – himself once a tabloid journalist – sees dark forces of political manipulation at work in the pages of the *National Enquirer*, the *Weekly World News* and their ilk. With an estimated 50 million regular readers in the USA, the supermarket rags are an ideal tool for maintaining the status quo.

The tabloids have their own special language: American troops will be blessed by visitations from Elvis and Jesus, while their enemies are portrayed as agents of the Devil.

The techniques of tabloid investigation are identical to those of spy operations and, at its peak, the CIA had 3,000 world-wide and over 400 agents working within the US media (including the tabloids) alone.

It's certainly tempting to accept Hogshire's claims; for example that Generoso Pope, founder of the *National Enquirer* and its publisher until his death in 1989, had close Mafia ties and was trained in psychological warfare by the CIA in the year before he set up the mother of all tabloids.

Although undeniably intriguing, this slender tome only provides an introductory peek into this fascinating and highly secretive world. But if Hogshire is right, attempting a more detailed investigation would be extremely difficult, perhaps even dangerous.

MARK PILKINGTON

## KENTUCKY GHOSTS

WILLIAM LYNWOOD MONTELL

University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, USA, 1994, pb £4.70, pp58. ISBN 0-8131-0909-4

The academic author of this small, pitiful collection has written a number of books and journals on local life and history. This "new book for new readers" provides little fare for those seeking the usual case book reporting style of hauntings. The standard is set by the introduction: "The stories you will be reading are a part of what is called folklore. Once you have read [them] who knows, perhaps you will become a master storyteller as well as a fine reader?"

The eight chapters deal with a variety of ghostly tales but, as each story has a different, unidentified author, it is somewhat difficult to maintain any continuity of interest or belief, let alone any pleasure in what is provided.

ANDREW GREEN



## MAPPING THE MILLENNIUM BEHIND THE PLANS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER

TERRY M BOARDMAN

Temple Lodge, London, 1998, pb £10.95, pp184, notes, illus. ISBN 0-9046-9397-X



It's a great change to read a conspiracy theory book which is well written and cogently argued; most of the genre appear to be from semi-literate authors with some combination of blatant racism, rabid paranoia, a cavalier disregard for historical accuracy and a very strange

understanding of logic. By contrast, Terry Boardman is a model of clarity.

Whether his arguments hold any water is another matter. The sub-title will be enough to warn off many readers. Are we in for the usual mish-mash of international bankers, media moguls, Freemasons, Illuminati et al, rich and powerful Jews the lot of 'em? Will the names Rothschild, Bilderberg, the Trilateral Commission, and so on, crop up? Well... yes.

Boardman's initial approach is fundamentally different from most conspiracy authors due to his unquestioning acceptance of the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy. 'Ahriman', the evil force of "the cold-blooded abstractions of materialism", and 'Lucifer', the evil force of "hothead passions and egotistical illusions" are the guys behind the secret societies plotting the political shape of Europe for the last century – not the (German) Rosicrucians, of whom Boardman seems to approve, but the (Anglo-Saxon) Freemasons, who he clearly sees as an enemy force.

Boardman is bright enough to

give us the standard get-out clauses early on in the book. Sometimes the plans of the "malevolent spiritual powers" do not fully succeed because they are frustrated by people working "in the service of the Higher Hierarchies"; also, sometimes the dark powers deliberately muddy the waters by spreading disinformation.

The first half of the book is an examination of late 19th century satirical maps of the world. The second half is a long, and long-winded, political and economic essay analysing a 1992 *Economist* article written as from 2992, which "looks back" over the millennium. Behind all these theoretical developments in foreign affairs Boardman sees the workings, through conscious or unconscious human agents, of Ahriman and Lucifer.

Boardman's analysis is interesting but limited. One wonders, if today's *Private Eye* were to produce a joke map of a redesigned world, what hidden messages Boardman's 2099 equivalent might find within it.

Still, it's an interesting new approach to a hoary old subject.

DAVID V BARRETT

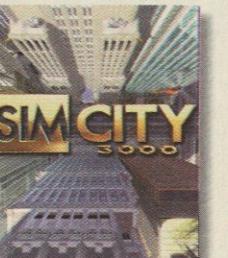




## MULTIMEDIA

## GAMES

## GODS AND MONSTERS



## SIM CITY 3000

Maxis/Electronic Arts, RRP £39.99, Platform: PC



## TRESPASSER

DreamWorks Interactive/Electronic Arts, RRP £39.99, Platform: PC

Inaaan.

Inaaan.

**A**sks to name a god-sim, most people would nominate *Sim City 2000*; for years it was, quite simply, the best realised simulation of a city. The latest incarnation, *SimCity 3000*, improves on that while retaining much that was familiar. You can take a custom city and adapt it, import an SC2K city, or (more fun) develop one from scratch; this involves choosing (or shaping) your land and creating your trans-

portation, commercial, residential, industrial and civic buildings and facilities. As your metropolis grows, you'll have to manage its power, waste, health, finances, education and entertainment, etc; get the needs of your citizens right and they'll riot, or simply leave. Great fun for fortynines are the random disasters, including tornadoes, quakes and attacks by aliens.

The serious SC3K gamer could

## GAME



## FALLOUT 2

Interplay, RRP £39.99, Platform: PC

*Fallout 2* is a role-playing game set in a post-nuclear-holocaust California 50 years after the first game.

The original was a great game with wonderful graphics, full of post-apocalyptic gangsters, mutants and monsters. This sequel delivers a second helping of the familiar elements, bigger in scope, with better AI for your team and other game characters and creatures, and lots of grown-up swearing and gore (both can be filtered out). It's just as addictive as the first one and side quests add many extra hours of play to the main mission which is to find the legendary 'Garden of Eden' kit.

BOB RICKARD

## MACWATCH

## BIGHOOT: THE GIANT OWL

Mark A. Hall, *Wonders*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Sept 1998)



The 'Big heads' of the Iroquois, Tuscarora and Wyandot Indians – huge bodiless heads with long hair, red eyes and huge claws; the 'Indad-hinga' of the Omahas and the Ponkas; the 'Big Owls' of the Apache; the 'Booger-Owls' of the Ozark Mountains; West Virginia's famous 'Mothman' and the 'Owlman' of Cornwall may all represent an unknown species of huge owl. Like other owl species, these fearsome flappers might spend their days hiding from humans disguised as logs and trees.

4 issues: \$18 USA; \$22 Europe; \$26 elsewhere. *Wonders*: Box 3153, Butler Station, Minneapolis, MN 55403, USA.



## PHOENIX LIGHTS REVISITED

Bruce Maccabee, *MUFON Journal* no. 370 (Feb 1999)

The 13 March 1997 light events over Phoenix, Arizona are already part of the ufological canon, mainly thanks to striking video footage of the loosely V-shaped light array. Despite initially denying it, the US military admitted later that the Maryland National Guard had indeed been dropping flares. MUFON investigator Richard Motzer also concluded that the lights were flares. A similar series of lights were seen in the same area on 14 January 1998. Maccabee received footage of this event and calculated that the lights were probably a lot further away than the witnesses thought. Maccabee's conclusions as a self-professed ETH believer provide fur-

ther evidence that this case can finally be put to bed.

12 issues: \$30 US, \$35 rest of world. *MUFON UFO Journal*, 103 Oldtowne Rd, Seguin, TX 78155-4099, USA.  
Web: [www.mufon.org](http://www.mufon.org)

## SPIRITED EXCHANGES: THE FIVE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON GHOST TOURS

John J Lamb, *Ghost Trackers Newsletter*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1998)



San Diego ghost tour operator Lamb finds that most people are largely ignorant of genuine ghost phenomena. Their questions can be broken down as follows:

1. "You don't actually believe in ghosts?"
  2. "What are ghosts?"
  3. "If ghosts are spirits, why do they wear clothes?"
  4. "The Bible says ghosts don't exist, so aren't you trafficking with demons?"
  5. "Do you perform 'soul rescue' missions?"
- Ghost Research Society membership: \$20.00 (includes three issues, badge, card, discounts on GRS events, books etc). Dale D Kaczmarek, PO Box 205, Oak Lawn, IL 60454-0205, USA. Email: [DKaczmarek@aol.com](mailto:DKaczmarek@aol.com). Web: [www.ghostresearch.org](http://www.ghostresearch.org)

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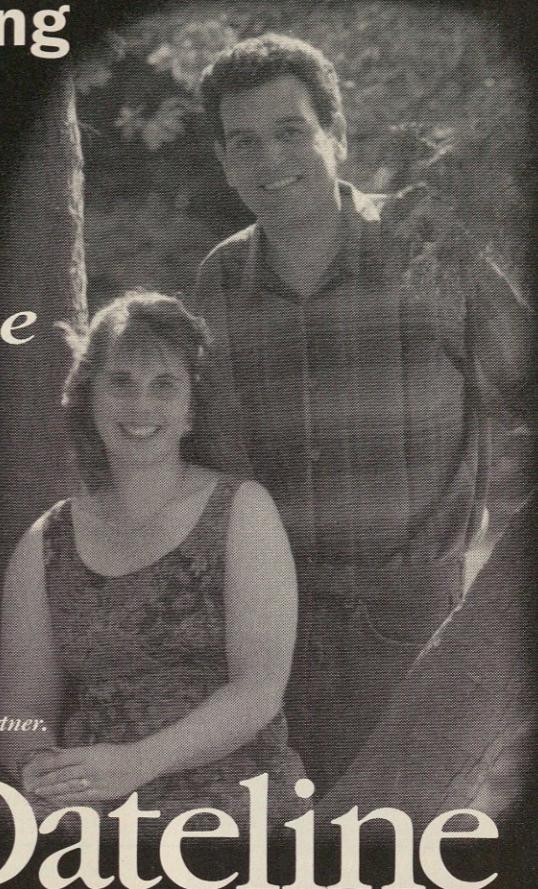
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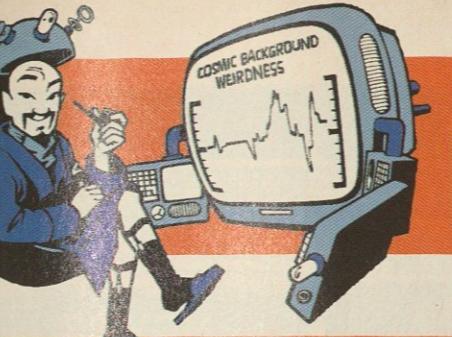
## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FORTÉAN'?

**FORTÉAN TIMES** is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort. Throughout his life, Fort was sceptical about scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away (which is quite different from explaining a thing).

Fort, born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth

his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

His dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate state between extremes. He had ideas of the universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena. He coined the term 'teleportation' and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."



## THE HIEROPHANT

**IN HIS FORTRESS OF ARROGANCE, DEEP BELOW THE HIMALAYAS, THE IMMORTAL ASCENDED MASTER KNOWN AS THE HIEROPHANT TRAVELS THE MORE DISREPUTABLE PATHS OF FORTÉANA**

Many of those working with matters paranormal – the Hierophant included – have been laughing their little socks off at a recent communication from former BUFORA supremo and longtime alien autopsy video supporter Philip Mantle. Mantle sets out, in minute and copiously misspelt detail, the rather remarkable conditions which apply to would-be contributors to *Quest Magazine*. It starts off merely odd, but soon drifts into much wackier territory: "Any article and/or image supplied to any of the company's magazines must not have been submitted to any other magazine prior to publication." After outlining the rates of pay ("a joke" – several aggrieved freelancers) and requesting a list of all other magazines to which the writer contributes, it all goes a bit Big Brother: "All contributors must advise us if they will be uncontactable for any period in excess of 24 hours – and provide dates when they will be out of touch. All contributors must provide a telephone number, fax or e-mail where they can be reached at all times." What next, I wonder – implants?

An interesting insight into the priorities of leading politicians and William Hague came with the publication of the Register of Members' Interests in February. Among such trivia as home loans and suiting material, we find Anne Widdicombe (who famously fingered Michael Howard as having "something of the night about him") declaring an unusual gift: one spoon (bent), signed by Uri Geller, presumably passed on by Uri when the pair opposed each other on a recent *Call My Bluff*. Geller, inevitably, used his superior mental powers to bamboozle Widdicombe into disbelieving his tales of smuggling a rare pasture grass called Danthonia out of Australia...

The dread march of Feng Shui continues apace. Computer printer manufacturers Lexmark have launched the world's first Feng Shui approved colour inkjet printer, as endorsed by the UK Feng Shui Consultancy (London). The endorsement is based, among other things, on the fact that the printer can work without a PC attached – thereby eliminating clutter, obviously – and its rounded shape "makes it very easy for the vital Feng Shui energy ('Chi') to pass around it, enabling it to release its own negative ions with normal ventilation". It says here. Uniquely, its inkjet mechanism "is smooth and efficient and harmonises with the water aspects of Feng Shui".

Quite why all this helps the flow of Chi remains obscure, but would you quarrel with the UK Feng Shui Consultancy (London)? A snip at around £350, I'm sure.



**IF YOU HAVE A LEAD ON ANY PARANORMAL GOSSIP, SHARE IT WITH THE HIEROPHANT**  
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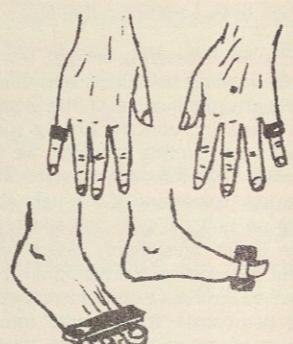
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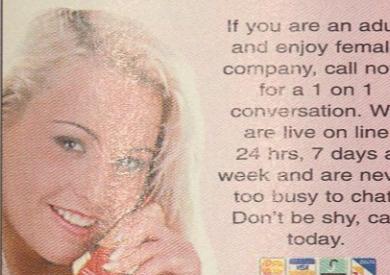
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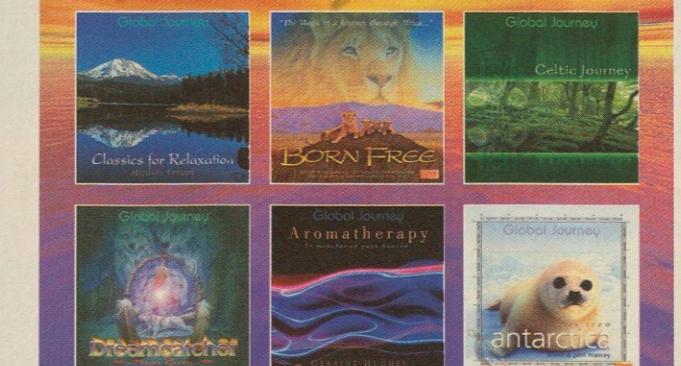
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IN CASES LIKE THIS, WITNESSES, EXPERTS, AND SCIENTISTS ARE ALL QUESTIONED...

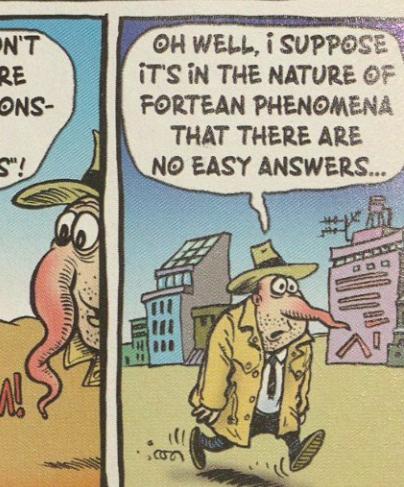
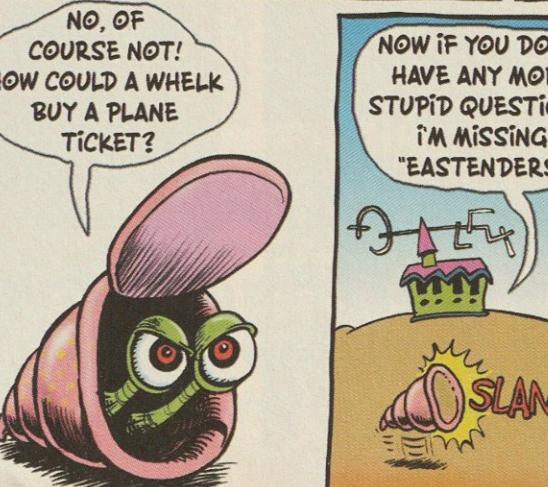
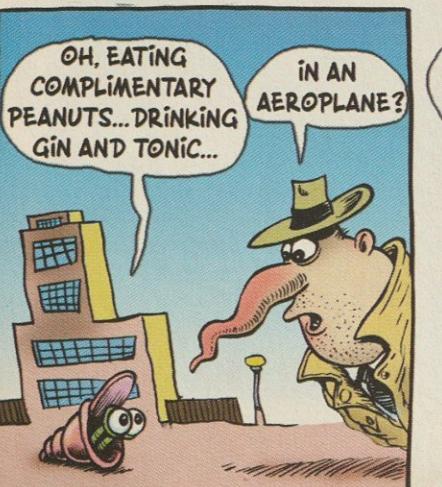
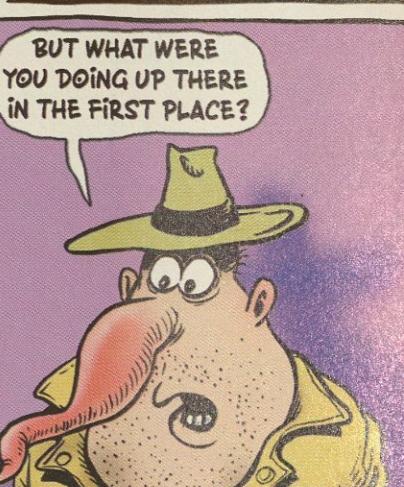
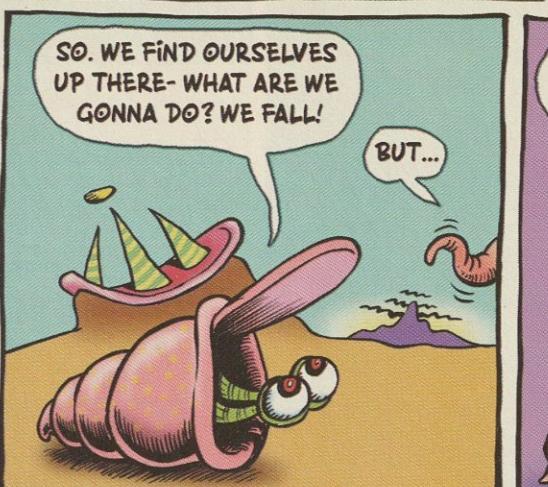
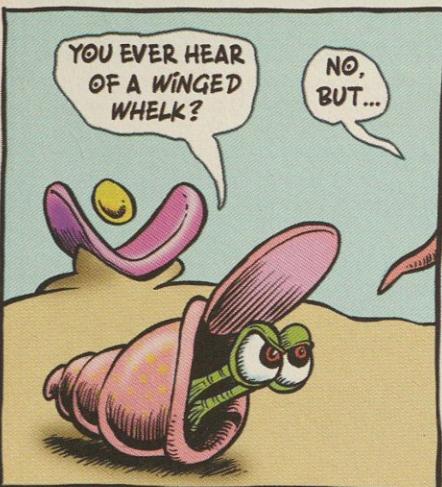
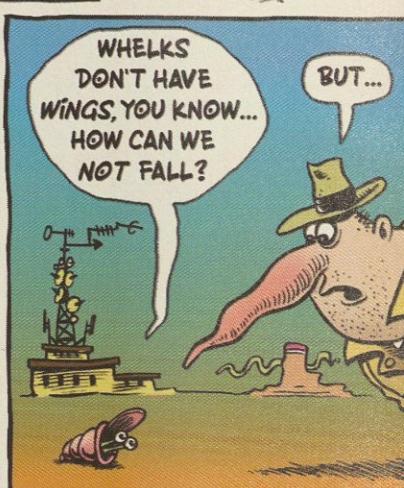
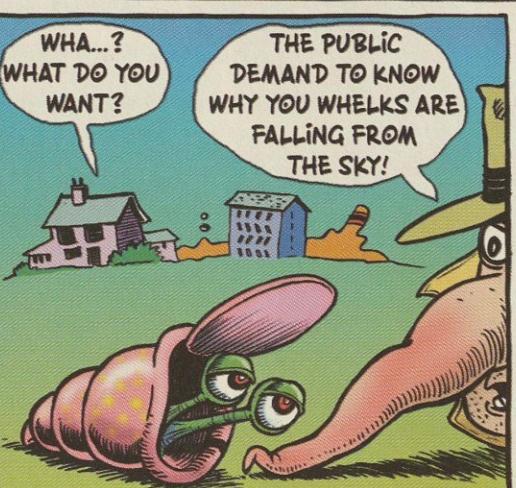
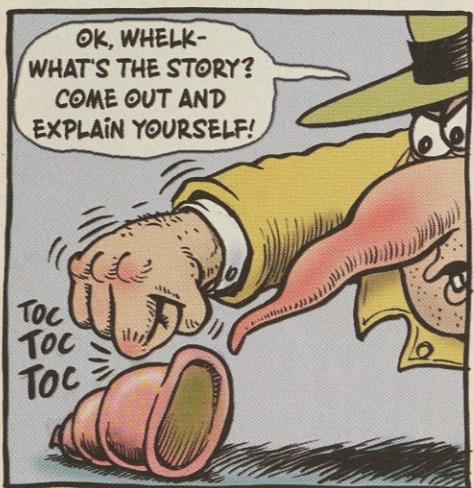
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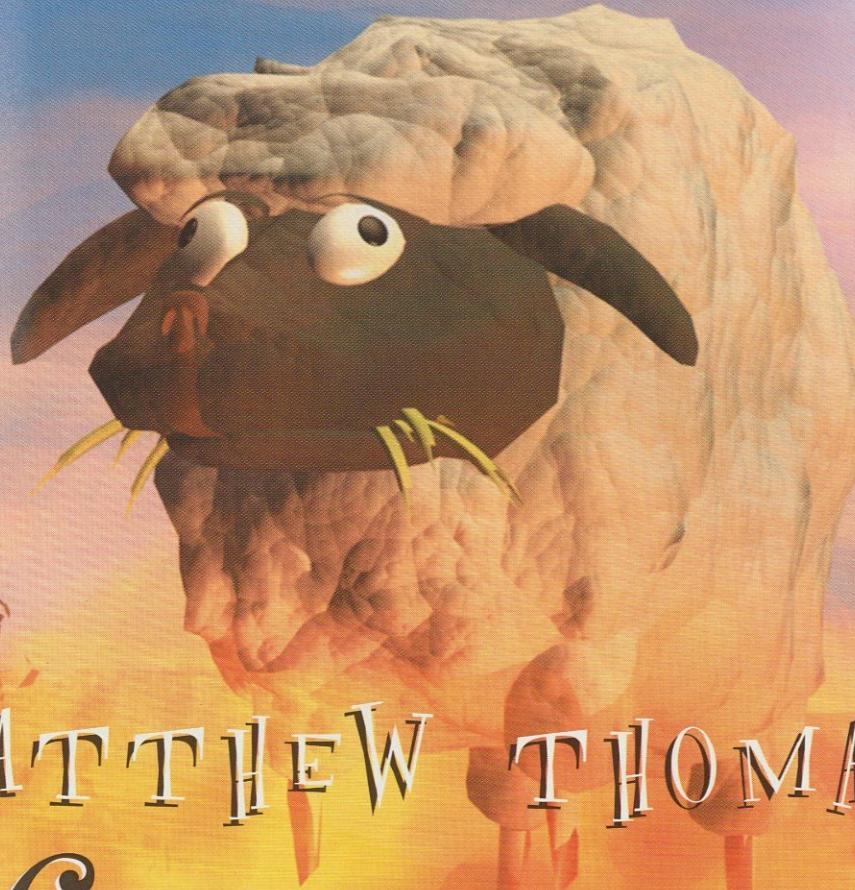
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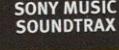
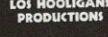
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